

Chronicles

November 2009

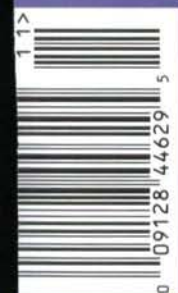
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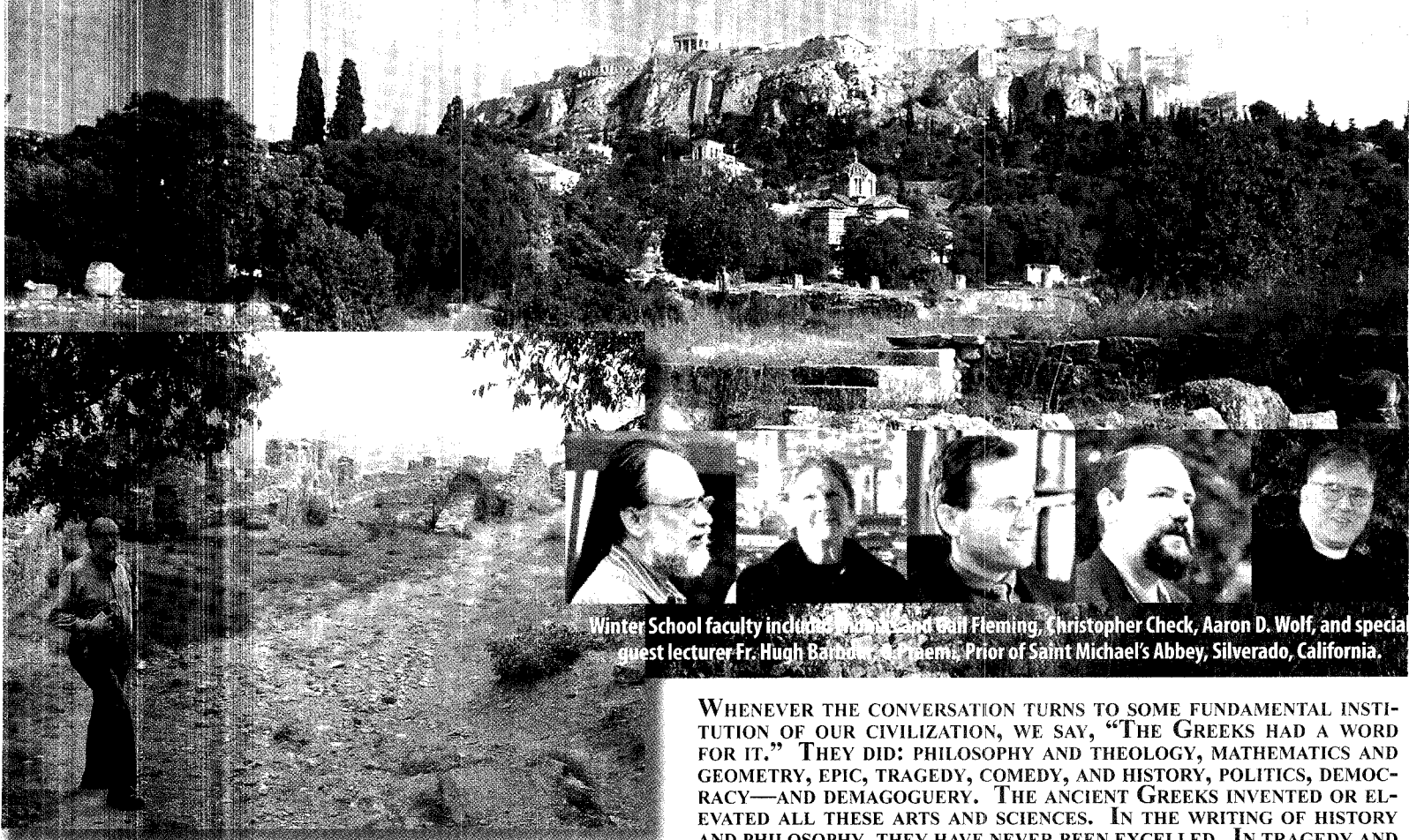


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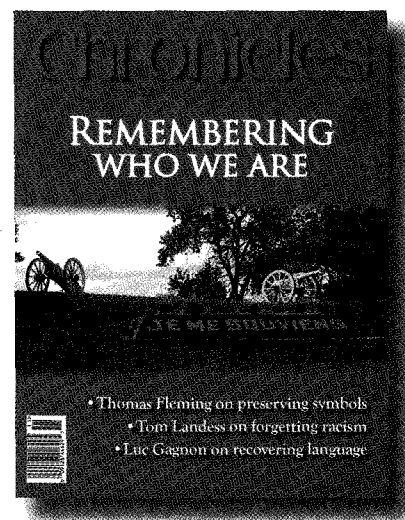
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A NOVEL BY

Chilton Williamson, Jr.

When retired U.S. Customs Bureau inspector Samuel Adams White (to his ex-wife, "the most boring human being") is abducted south of the border by Mexican drug smugglers, he is given the chance to flee for his life. Desperately trying to reach the border, he is pursued across the deserts of rural Mexico. Through a series of hair-raising adventures, the inspector discovers self-reliance, resourcefulness, the reality of the natural world—and of romance. The reader discovers the profound differences, as well as their origins and implications, between Mexican culture and that of El Norte, her neighbor across the Rio Grande. The tale is suffused with Williamson's understanding of and sympathy for a people among whom he is well traveled.

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by William J. Quirk

What Now?

According to *The New Yorker* (September 27), “America did not plunge into an economic abyss” because of the government’s “bold stroke” guaranteeing money-market funds and flipping Goldman Sachs into a bank holding company. “The reprieve bought enough time for the reemergence of reason over unbridled fear.” Massive government spending and guarantees are now propping up the financial market, the housing market, and the economy in general. Washington’s theory is that its “pump-priming” will ignite private spending, but many believe government intervention has achieved nothing but a temporary respite in the economy’s search for its bottom. We have just been kicking the can down the road.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reports the national debt held by the public in 2019 will be \$17.5 trillion (OMB Mid-Session Review, August 25). That assumes, of course, that the Chinese (or someone) will lend us another nine trillion dollars over the next ten years. We will need to add another \$5.4 trillion to the national debt because the government has taken responsibility for the debt of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, giving us a rounded total of \$23 trillion—an astonishing number considering that the debt in 2000, when most everyone thought it was very high, was a mere \$3.4 trillion. Right now, the Fed itself is buying our long-term Treasuries, but that has to be a practice with a limited future. Does any reasonable person think more and more borrowing is sustainable?

One person does—Paul Krugman, a professor at Princeton and contributor to the *New York Times*, who cautions against what he calls debt “hysteria.” Yes, the debt outlook is not wonderful, but it’s no worse than what we saw at the end of World War II, or what a number of “advanced” countries are seeing right now. The debt, as he puts

it, can be “dealt with”; it’s “manageable.” The public, however, disagrees: A recent poll shows that Americans give a higher priority to reducing the deficit than to reviving the economy.

Professor Krugman’s analysis has problems. The OMB projects that GDP will increase by 50 percent, so that by 2019 tax revenues will be \$4.2 trillion, and interest cost will be \$722 billion, which would be 17 percent of revenues. These projections may not work out. We may see very little economic growth over the next decade. (U.S. incomes have been flat since 1997.) Interest rates could be much higher. Currently, there are six job-seekers for every opening; Professor Krugman needs to find seven million new jobs to rehire the workers just fired, plus an additional 2.5 million for new workers. After all, a jobless recovery is an economist’s abstraction.

If the OMB is wrong, then our future is black. If it is right, that future is gray. Either way, we will have to learn to live with a huge debt. Our situation may be “manageable” or able to be “dealt with,” but the rest of us may not want to live like that. The basic theory of democracy—which Professor Krugman is forgetting—is that the current majority must have complete freedom of action. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “the earth belongs to the living.” The present has no right to legislate for the future, to bind those who come after them with debt.

What’s the interest on \$23 trillion? That, of course, depends on the interest rate. Assuming the rate is 4.2 percent, the interest is one trillion dollars. Our total revenue in 2009 will be under two trillion. If our tax revenues are flat until 2019, that trillion-dollar interest cost will eat up about half of all tax collections. Currently, interest cost is only \$173 billion, or 8.3 percent of revenue. Interest cost has remained low because wary investors have been willing to buy Treasury

bonds at rates as low as zero percent. Nonetheless, we can’t go on borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend. A family doing that would soon be out on the street.

Assuming things don’t get worse, all we have to do is pay the one trillion dollars in interest. Of course, the \$23 trillion principal would remain. It rolls on forever—what the Founding Fathers called a perpetual debt. None of them thought our experiment could succeed with a perpetual debt. Our republic, as Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, rests on the consent of the governed. The theory fails if half of all tax collections go to pay for past decisions. The governed consent to popular programs by paying taxes to support them; they won’t pay for programs they don’t like. Debt appears when the government goes ahead with programs the people don’t support. During his two terms as president, George W. Bush raised the debt held by the public from \$3.4 to \$5.2 trillion to pay for one unpopular war and some lame domestic programs. In one year President Obama has added another \$1.6 trillion to conduct two unpopular wars and bail out bankers, and he projects another \$9 trillion over the next ten years.

We could cut other expenses, but there is not much talk of that. Indeed, huge shortfalls in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, *etc.*, are looming, but we are ignoring those for the moment. How about raising government revenues? Well, in 2008, personal-income taxes generated a little over one trillion dollars. We could close the deficit if we double personal-income-tax collections. Someone earning \$175,000 of taxable income paid \$42,500 in federal taxes in 2008. He would pay \$85,000 under the new rules. Someone with \$100,000 of taxable income paid \$23,000—which would double to \$46,000. Most taxpayers believe they are taxed too heavily already, and they

are not willing—or able—to see their federal income-tax burden doubled.

If raising personal-income taxes doesn't work, how about increasing the Social Security tax? It collects almost as much as the personal-income tax—\$900 billion in 2008. We could nearly close the deficit by doubling the Social Security tax. The current rate, counting both the employee and the employer shares, is 15.04 percent. Today, for every \$100 he earns, a worker gets \$85 in his paycheck, and the rest goes to Washington. If the payroll tax were doubled, over 30 percent of a worker's wages would be withheld, reducing the worker's take-home pay to \$70.

If raising traditional taxes won't raise what we need, can we invent some new tax? The Obama administration is reportedly considering a European-style value-added tax, which has the advantage of hiding the tax in the final price of the product—a shirt that costs \$100 today might cost \$120 with the VAT tacked on. The federal government has not imposed a property tax since the War of 1812, and today it would compete directly with towns, cities, and school districts. Our bankers have off-loaded their losses onto the taxpayer and are happily re-

turning to what they call business as usual. A tax on some of their transactions—like derivatives trading—is a good idea, but the Obama administration would not dare to push for it.

Where, then, will the money to pay the interest come from? In 2008 U.S. median household income fell 3.6 percent to \$50,323—the sharpest drop since the government started keeping records in 1942. According to a recent Census Bureau Report, in 2009, income is expected to drop five percent. Globalism has been profitable for capital, but it has destroyed American household incomes.

The taxes will have to come out of the upper-middle class. President Obama believes that families making over \$250,000 are “rich.” Of the 141 million tax returns filed, the 2.8 million returns that reported incomes of over \$250,000 represent the top two percent of taxpayers. When compared with the median income, \$50,000, the top two percent who average \$1.14 million do seem well off, but let's look more closely at their situation.

There are great disparities within the top two percent. There are the truly rich—Americans who own yachts, private jets, a vacation home in the Hamptons—who don't need

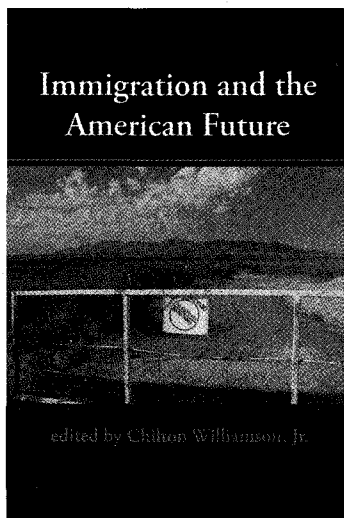
to work to live an affluent lifestyle. Then there are the families at the lower end, the bottom one-to-two percent of President Obama's “rich,” who earn \$250,000 to \$410,000 per year. This sounds like a lot, but these families are probably already paying \$100,000 in total taxes, which doesn't leave a lot left over.

The top ten percent of American families earn good incomes, more than \$100,000, but, unlike the top one percent, they don't have substantial savings. Those who make up the lower end of Obama's “rich” have more in common with the top ten percent than they have with the truly rich. Any new tax collections would change the way they live.

The bottom 90 percent of American families are in no position to pay more taxes. Their average income is \$39,000, and that income has been relatively stagnant since the mid-1970's. It is hard to see how they are getting by now, let alone what they will do if saddled with part of the new trillion-dollar tax burden. Globalism has hit them hard.

What do we get in return for what is—if we are lucky—a gray future? In September 2008, when Lehman Brothers failed, Ben Bernanke told hesitant congressional leaders that if the government left it alone, things “would be very bad.” Specifically, “You could see a twenty percent decline in the stock market, unemployment at nine to ten percent, the failure of G.M., certainly, and other large corporate failures.” We have seen all of that, along with the mountain of debt spent to avoid it. The Obama administration used to say that things are bad now, but they would be much worse if we had done nothing. Now it has to say that things are as bad as we said they would be if we left it alone, but we were wrong: Things would really have been much worse. Well, someone might say, if you were wrong then ...

William Quirk is the author, most recently, of Courts & Congress. Janek Kazmierski, a third-year law student, gave invaluable assistance in the preparation of this article.



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UNHAPPY ANNIVERSARY

The one-year anniversary of the 2008 global financial-market implosion passed with little fanfare. With the U.S. stock market soaring throughout the spring and summer, the Pollyannas of the American media preferred to focus their attention on the return of good times while ignoring all that ancient ugliness of last year. In September 2008, at the height of the crisis, most financial prognosticators predicted nothing but gloom as they gazed into their crystal balls. Yet one year later U.S. equity markets have risen over 50 percent from the March 2009 trough, interest rates on U.S. government debt hover at historic lows, and housing is already rebounding in some markets.

While the stock market's performance over the last six months has surprised even many bullish investors, danger lies ahead. Numerous data highlight the persistent economic rot that contributed to the crash of 2008. The present administration has ramped up deficit spending to an unprecedented level. The dollar has weakened against all major currencies. The miniscule interest rates paid on government bonds, representing the latest financial-asset bubble, have drawn cautionary remarks from Chinese and German authorities. The "official" unemployment rate has reached 10 percent, while the more realistic unofficial rate has blown past 16 percent. American banks, saddled with toxic mortgages and underwater derivative securities, have survived solely thanks to the taxpayers' reluctant largesse. And now the FDIC has reported that it will be insolvent by the end of October.

This litany of troubles does not support the recent rise in stock prices. If anything, each of these red flags should be telling Americans that the crisis, like the war in Iraq, will last longer, cost more money, and hurt more Americans than even the direst predictions at first assumed.

The collapse of 2008 reshaped the American financial landscape. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, who in flusher times proposed that their long-term debt should replace the 30-year U.S. Treasury bond as the benchmark interest-rate product, now function as wards of the state. Washington Mutual, Countrywide, and Merrill Lynch each jumped into the arms of supposedly more stable competitors. And Lehman Brothers vanished as a result of its management's colossal hubris. AIG, the largest recipient of taxpayer pelf, continues to astound analysts with its reverse stock splits and the ungrateful pronouncements of its latest caudillo from his weekend crash pad in Croatia.

The decline in the average American's net worth merits further discussion. With their houses worth some fraction of their 2007 peak and their stock portfolios down 25 percent on average, American consumers will be less apt to consume at their previous ravenous pace. As investors receive their wilting monthly brokerage statements, the wealth effect will deter big-ticket purchases. But this slowdown will not be all bad. Consumers shed their last inhibitions about consumption for the sake of consumption sometime during the Internet Bubble of the Clinton years. A recent example details just how ridiculous consumer excess, and the accompanying debt, became. On September 26, the *New York Times* described one borrower who got deeper into trouble as the 2008 crisis approached: "In April 2008, according to bankruptcy records, he began using a Discover card. May 2008: a Shell card. June 2008: five new credit cards. July 2008: three more, including ones from Sony and Radio Shack. August 2008: two more."

The *Times* also detailed this credit-card junkie's insolvent personal-income statement. On \$800 of monthly income, he ran up \$1,108 in expenses every month, including \$450 for rent and \$390 for food. Why bother liv-

ing within your means when 11 credit-card companies are willing to fund your profligacy?

But this story has an even scarier twist. In this specific case you might have heard of the irresponsible spendthrift. He is Najibullah Zazi, the aspiring terrorist now being held without bail for plotting to mark the anniversary of September 11 by blowing something up in New York City. While the rest of us fill out "Know Your Client" forms at brokerage offices to prove that we are neither money launderers nor drug dealers, Al Qaeda-trained terrorists exploit the countless credit-card solicitations clogging the postal system. Even though corporations are amoral by design, it should not be too much to ask that they not abet terrorists intent on killing the residents of the country in which they are domiciled. Indeed, the funny money that resulted from years of Federal Reserve pump priming has come back to haunt us in a way that even the most creative neocon scaremongers never imagined.

Setting aside his alleged terrorist aspirations, Najibullah Zazi typifies the financially overextended American. His bankrupt balance sheet is a microcosm of the federal government's parlous financial position. Our foreign lenders have taken note of our financial predicament even though Congress refuses to recognize it. In May, Chinese students at Peking University laughed in the face of Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner when he told them that "Chinese assets are very safe," in reference to their country's investments in U.S. government bonds. If the dollar were to lose its status as the world's reserve currency and as the unit of account in the global oil market, U.S. interest rates would soar, likely crushing the domestic economy, if not putting an end to our post-war global financial hegemony. On the bright side, Najibullah Zazi and his friends might have trouble financing their monstrous schemes.

—Mark G. Brennan

ANOTHER REPUBLICAN RETREATS

It's hard to know whether the dirty bomb the *Washington Post* detonated two months before the Virginia gubernatorial election will affect the outcome of the race. The *Post* dropped it August 30, instead of October 10 or 15, when it would have done maximum damage to its target, Republican Bob McDonnell. Other issues, such as the national healthcare debate, may ultimately help McDonnell's opponent, Democrat Creigh Deeds. As *Chronicles* goes to press, the election is four weeks away.

The device that exploded outside McDonnell's campaign door was his master's thesis, written for Pat Robertson's Regent University in 1989, when the former attorney general of Virginia was just 34 years old and still two years away from holding elected office. McDonnell himself mentioned the thesis in an interview with the paper. The reporter, Amy Gardner, dutifully procured a copy and wrote a story calculated to demolish the candidate—a typical *Post* operation.

The upshot of the thesis is this: Feminism, homosexuals, and leftist welfare policies are bad for American culture, in general, and the American family, in particular, and politicians should enact policies, such as tax laws that encourage mothers to stay at home, that counteract these bad things. According to the *Post*, "Robert F. McDonnell submitted a master's thesis to the evangelical school he was attending in Virginia Beach in which he described working women and feminists as 'detrimental' to the family. He said government policy should favor married couples over 'cohabitators, homosexuals or fornicators.' He described as 'illogical' a 1972 Supreme Court decision legalizing the use of contraception by unmarried couples."

The *Post* did not cotton to McDonnell's suggestion that separation of church and state was "intended to prevent government encroachment upon the free church, not eliminate the impact of religion on society." Gardner fretted, "he criticized federal tax cred-

its for child care expenditures because they encouraged women to enter the workforce."

In his thesis, McDonnell wrote, "Further [government child care] expenditures would be used to subsidize a dynamic new trend of working women and feminists that is ultimately detrimental to the family by entrenching status-quo of nonparental primary nurture of children." Even worse, Gardner reported, wiping her fevered brow, "[h]e went on to say feminism is among the 'real enemies of the traditional family.'"

You can imagine the ensuing pandemonium. The left went cuckoo. As the *Post* reported in its Day Two follow-up, "[t]he story quickly spread on liberal blogs, including Daily Kos, Talking Points Memo and the Huffington Post. By late afternoon, more than 70 blogs had picked up the thread." McDonnell's opponent, state senator Creigh Deeds, a dopey, irascible fellow, had a club with which to beat the GOP candidate for the remainder of the campaign.

McDonnell immediately began damage control, first by trying to disassociate himself from clearly unacceptable views. Responding to the first *Post* story, McDonnell said he is "fully supportive of the tremendous contributions women make in the workplace. My wife and daughters work. My campaign manager in 2005 was a working mother. I appointed five women to my senior staff as Attorney General." In other words, he got religion. Before the second story appeared, McDonnell conducted an unprecedented 90-minute conference call with reporters to reiterate that he had hung up the club, doffed the bear-skin, and moved out of the cave.

It didn't help. Within a week, McDonnell was painted as a Neanderthal misogynist and "homophobe" who wants back-alley abortions and women barefoot, pregnant, and tethered to the Frigidaire. All because the *Washington Post* conducted a classic newspaper operation: "The Virginia governor's race ignited Monday," it amusingly reported in its second story, as if some other arsonist had set the blaze. It's a typical tactic to generate readership:

Start the fire, then report on it.

Oddly, the *Post* missed two of McDonnell's best lines: "Democrats are likely to redefine family in a way that labels what was once deviant as acceptable," and they "seek to shepherd a nation of powerless incompetents." That pretty much describes the party of abortion and deviant sex, and you have to wonder why the *Post* reporter didn't pick up on it.

The most disappointing thing about all of this was McDonnell's hasty retreat—typical of the GOP. Some observers argued that he had to "distance himself" from his thesis just enough to satisfy "women" but not so much as to dissatisfy his "conservative base." He should have stood firm for a simple reason: Whatever blame McDonnell laid at the door of feminism and homosexuals for the family's problems, he did not say women should not work or that homosexuals should be subject to discrimination.

The thesis strongly implied, and McDonnell obviously believed, that mothers should not work because having a mother at home with her chil-



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dren is the ideal way to rear them. And he was right. Nothing is wrong with or particularly controversial about that view, or even the view that married women should not work outside the home. Millions of Americans agree, although few of them likely work at the *Post*. Even so, McDonnell didn't go near the subject of working women. What he should have emphasized in his own defense was this: Not one of the 15 policy recommendations at the end of the thesis says or even implies anything of the sort. Indeed, he suggests tax incentives to persuade businesses to adopt parental-leave policies that "allow lengthy position-protected leaves." Those, of course, would mostly benefit women. The *Post* conveniently ignored this important fact, just as it ignored the other "real enemies of the traditional family" McDonnell was rightly worried about: lust, selfishness, materialism, and irresponsibility. The *Post* put McDonnell's reputedly "sexist" and "homophobic" observations front and center and ignored the others to harm the candidate.

The thesis is no literary masterpiece, but it is a temperate, even bland scholarly work containing boilerplate conservatism. It says nothing that conservatives haven't been saying since the original Ugly Betty got tired of the

ironing. "Where there are strong families, the freedom of the individual expands and the reach of the state contracts. Where family life weakens and fails, government advances, intrudes, and ultimately compels." There, McDonnell was citing a Reagan-era White House "working group on the family." "There is nothing so devastating to the American family as divorce," McDonnell added. He wrote about teen pregnancy, public schools promoting humanism, and quoted Allan Carlson's work showing that federal tax policy forces mothers into the workplace. In one particularly insightful (though not particularly well-written) passage, McDonnell wrote, "the family as an institution is antecedent to civil government, and hence not subject to being defined by it. It is in the Law of Nature of the created Order that the Creator instituted marriage and family in Eden."

Again, this is standard stuff—nothing original or shocking at all. Indeed, one flaw is that McDonnell contradicts himself. The "central premise of this thesis is that the preservation and strengthening of the traditional family unit by government will, in the long run, substantially eliminate the need for a comprehensive and expensive federal bureaucracy to resolve domestic social problems." Before that, how-

ever, he had written that "Where family life weakens and fails, government advances." It's hard to see how government policies brought on by the weakening of the family can be expected to strengthen the family.

Yet if what McDonnell wrote hardly deviates from the standard conservative playbook, why did the thesis generate such bile on the left? Because 20 years have passed since he wrote his thesis, and leftist, anti-Christian ideology is more firmly ensconced in the media, culture, and government. Mothers are going to work, period. Buggery is just another lifestyle. And any words against these developments constitute "hate" and "phobias" that will not be tolerated.

McDonnell's political fate may hang on this manufactured crisis. But nothing was wrong with his thesis, which ends with this pithy, undeniable truth: "As the family goes, so goes the nation."

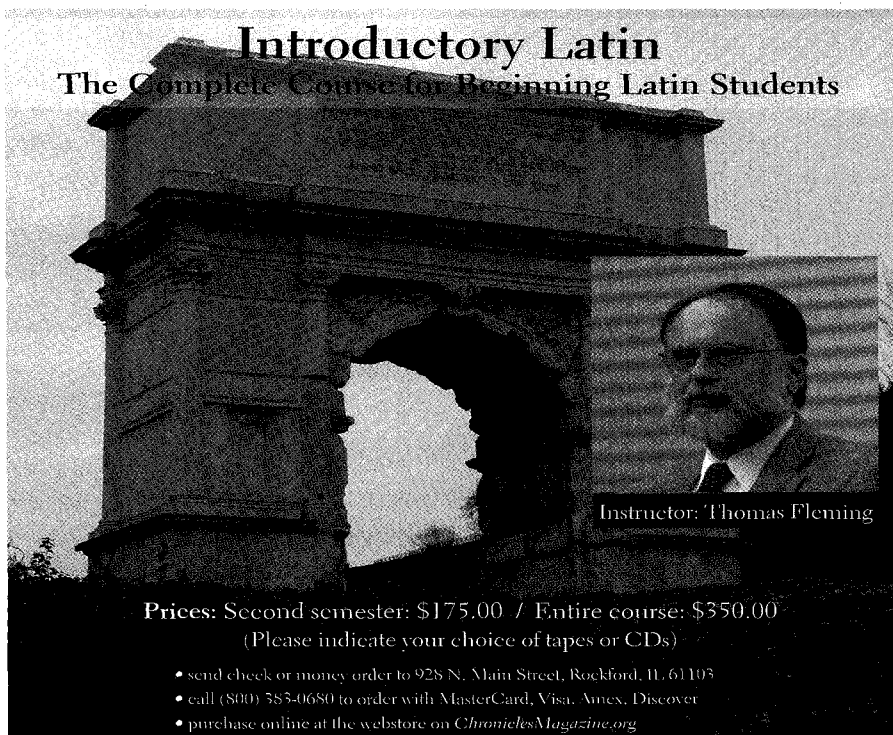
—R. Cort Kirkwood

OBITER DICTA

Our poet this month is the late **James Graves** (1934-2009). James Burney Graves, Jr., was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A classicist, linguist, and historian, he taught at the University of North Carolina and the University of Georgia, and served as headmaster of two private academies in South Carolina. Over the course of a long career as writer and editor, he saw over 300 articles, reviews, and poems published.

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Something to Remember

Francis Parkman concluded his monumental account of France and England in North America with the Peace of Paris of 1763, by which France ceded Quebec, once and for all, to the British Empire. In an uncharacteristically smug observation on the aftermath, Parkman described the French Canadians as “a people bereft of every vestige of civil liberty,” adding,

Civil liberty was given them by the British sword; but the conqueror left their religious system untouched, and through it they have imposed upon themselves a weight of ecclesiastical tutelage that finds few equals in most Catholic countries of Europe . . . and if French Canada would fulfill its aspirations it must cease to be one of the most priest-ridden countries of the modern world.

I wonder what Parkman, who really did love Quebec and her people, would say today, now that nationalists have rejected not just priests and the Church but the entire Christian moral order. One might say that after surviving two centuries of English domination, Quebecers have thrown out the baby Jesus with the holy water.

The most obvious aspect of the Quebec identity is language. It is my impression that French is more universal now than it was when I first visited the city some 35 years ago. One of the queerest results of the French separatist movement is the status of the French language. Canada is officially a bilingual country, and even the smallest community in Ontario or Manitoba is supposed to provide street signs and official documents in both French and English. Once an Anglo-Canadian enters Quebec, however, he had better be prepared to leave his language behind.

Canadian French does present something of a dilemma. If the Québécois decided to preserve only their local dialect, they would be cut off from the great francophone universe whose literature and ideas have dominated our world for five centuries. On the other hand, if they decided to speak cosmopolitan French, they would be like the pitiable Americans who come back from a year at Oxford speaking like the queen herself. The obvious compromise has been to preserve Québécois as a home and folk language, while encouraging the study of standard French in school and promoting it through the media.

In the lower 48, Southerners face a similar language problem, which has led to some silliness about adopting British spelling, but the truth is that anything like the standard English spoken by educated Americans in the 1940's has been replaced by the cosmopolitan Valley Girl dialect you hear on NPR. If North American conservatives wish to pre-

serve any part of their identity, they had better clean up their language and teach their children and grandchildren the language not only of Dr. Johnson and G.K. Chesterton but of Booth Tarkington and Scott Fitzgerald.



When the French army capitulated in Canada, it was without conditions, and the government of Louis XV took no steps to preserve the language or religion of France's former subjects. The Catholics did not know what to expect. The great English model for a conquered province was Ireland, where the Catholics were persecuted and stripped of their lands. The first British governor, James Murray, had been Gen. James Wolfe's successor, and he was very sympathetic to the Canadiens (French Canadians), whom he admired for their hard work and general decency. He won from the crown the rights of Catholics to practice their religion, but only in conformity with British law—which was, as the Irish knew, no right at all. His deputy and successor, Sir Guy Carleton, was equally sympathetic and returned to England to argue his case. The result was the Quebec Act of 1774, which granted the Canadiens the right to use their language as well as a privileged provision for the Church. The act also pushed the boundary of the province of Quebec south to the Ohio River. New Englanders were outraged at the thought that they might have Catholic neighbors in Ohio, and their worst nightmare was the fear that if the act were extended to the 13 colonies, mackerel-snappers could say Mass in Boston without facing execution.

British Protestants in Canada did not entirely shed their anti-Catholicism, but they did a pretty good job of learning to collaborate with individual Catholics and with the Church Herself, which, in Quebec, enjoyed official protection and support. In the 1950's under the conservative premiership of Maurice Duplessis, Church and state worked together to make the province a beacon of light in a darkening world.

Unfortunately, provincial and even national cultures do not have sufficient strength to resist the tidal wave of modernism that engulfed traditional Christian cultures in the 20th century. When the so-called Quiet Revolution got under way, undermining not only the Church's authority but all moral authority apart from the anarchic passions of the individual, the 60's rebels looked back at the postwar years and described the period as “*le Grand Noirceur*,” the great darkness from which they were liberated—but from what

and for what? Most of us like to think we are “our own persons,” free agents who make up our own minds about everything. This is hardly ever the case, especially with people who join revolutions. In liberating themselves from bondage to family, church, and tradition, they are simply enslaving themselves to fashion—and the government.

The 60's generation—my generation—are a spoiled, selfish, and ignorant people, who can change our wives, religion, and sexuality as easily as we slip from one pair of designer jeans to another. Mine is not a generation of vipers, but a generation of dung beetles living off the excrement of earlier generations. We can only consume. We create nothing.

When Lord Durham arrived in Canada as governor general on a mission to sort things out after the rebellion of 1837-38, he made two memorable observations. In the first he described Canada as “two warring nations with a single state”—a remark that has been quoted as often by the English as by the French—but he also described the Québécois as “a people with neither history nor literature.”

There is some truth to Durham's jibe. Unlike Sicily or Scotland or the American South, Quebec has not played a disproportionately important part in the culture of its country. This is partly because Quebec was not yet a nation when she was conquered by the British, and the cultural traditions the French settlers had brought from the Old World were folkloric. In the decades following the conquest, what literary scene there was came to be dominated by the provincial imitators of the Enlightenment—a misfortune that afflicts most provincial peoples, as in the South, which is dominated by Ivy League imitators who read the *New York Times* and *The New Republic*.

Despite the dearth of major literary figures Quebec is no exception to the rule that nations must survive in the imagination, if they are to survive at all. The Acadiens, transplanted from Nova Scotia to Louisiana, today exist primarily through Cajun music, and the folk music and café songs of Quebec help to define the national character.

One of the most enduring songs, “*Un Canadien Errant*,” was even a hit on the American folk scene. The song was written in 1842, a few years after Lord Durham's arrival, by Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, a student who had heard of the rebellion and the harsh punishment meted out to the rebels, who suffered execution and exile. In the last words of the third verse, the banished Canadian asks us to “tell my friends that I remember them.”

In time this song became the anthem not just for Canadiens in exile, like the Acadiens who adopted it, but for a people who came to regard themselves as exiles and strangers in their own land. Even to this day, “*Je me souviens*” is the motto of the Quebec nation that for so many generations kept faith with their ancestors, their traditions, and their religion.

If a few folk songs and novels were the sum total of French culture available to Quebec, they would be perhaps even more culturally malnourished than we Americans would be if we were suddenly deprived of the classics of English literature, against which American fiction and poetry make a

pathetic showing. Fortunately, French is one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, literary language of the past 500 years, and an educated French Canadian is at home in the language of Racine and Molière, Balzac and Baudelaire and Bernanos. Unfortunately, many Quebec nationalists take as little interest in French civilization as they do in the Catholic Church, and they are systematically destroying every social, moral, and cultural impediment to the multicultural Quebec that in providing a home to Haitians and Algerians will make the natives strangers in their own land.

Like the Québécois, civilized and morally responsible Americans are becoming aliens in our own country. By 2020, the left gleefully boasts, the United States will have a non-European majority. But the English language and its great literature is less threatened by Mexican immigrants than by the twin forces of public education and popular culture. When I listen to people under 30 or even under 40, I have trouble understanding their *patois* of broken phrases, worn-out clichés, all in the present tense with only one verb—*goes*—and delivered in the Valley Girl accent that makes every phrase a question. I am speaking not only of mall rats under 25 but of a certain Harvard graduate in high office whenever he speaks—excuse me, “goes”—without the benefit of a teleprompter.

Americans, it is true, attend church services more often than Europeans do, but this statistic does not translate into lower rates of divorce, illegitimacy, and drug abuse. Many of the most popular churches are simply weird commercial cults that have no discernible connection with historic Christianity. Added to this mix are non-Christian religions, not just Judaism, with which we Christians have had to deal since the beginning, but Islam, Hinduism, and voodoo.

Then what, in a practical sense, can be done to remedy our amnesia? There is no point in talking about what government can do in a country whose parties have offered, as their standard-bearers in the past four elections, a set of self-important hacks and hucksters who could not play a president on television, much less on the world's stage.

Whatever significant regress is to be made, then, is up to ordinary people within their own community and circle of friends. Some have been willing to throw the fakirs out of the pulpits; others have refused to permit shopping malls and office complexes to replace historic and beautiful buildings; while still other brave souls have resisted every effort to remove religious images from public spaces or even defended the Confederate flag.

Religious and historical symbols are more potent than might be imagined. They are cultural talismans that work magic. Driving into Quebec, visitors have to go by the Parliament building, which flies only one flag, the *Fleurdelisé*. It is the flag of Quebec, the ancient royalist *fleur-de-lys*, set within a cross. Since Quebec has the status of “a nation within a nation,” we can say it is the only Christian national flag in North America. Quebecers may be eager to abandon their religion and their history, but in preserving the symbols they have given their descendants something to remember.

The Ransoming of Hector *by James Graves*

Snug in their huts beside the wine-dark sea,
Man-slaying Achilles and his henchmen
Had not supposed that anyone so frail
As Priam was might overreach their guards—
Penetrate the camp—burst in on them—
Approach and supplicate the Captain.
The Greeks were stunned that night when he appeared,
Threw wasted arms about those iron knees,
And planted kisses on the hands that had
Laid low so many of his towering sons:
The dodderer announced he'd come resolved
To buy back Hector's corpse and give it rites
According to the manner of his sires.

If you're too young to know the impotence
That supervenes when once-coherent nerves
Begin to slacken and your rawhide will
Against your will relaxes as your taut physique
Unstrings itself in time, then only time
Can give you to assess the force of love
That drove this king, to fetch his last slain son
Through night, and dread, and deep senectitude.

by Roger D. McGrath

The Flying Tigers

The first “paper & stick” model airplane I ever made was a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk. I painted it in the color scheme of the famed Flying Tigers, including the shark’s mouth on the cowl and air scoop. Mine was powered not by a 1040 horsepower V-12 Allison but by a rubber band that I wound by turning the prop dozens of times. Flight duration was only a matter of seconds, but in that short time I shot down Zeros aplenty. There was nothing more adventurous for a young kid in the early 50’s than daydreaming of the Flying Tigers dueling the Japanese in the skies over China and Burma. Although the Flying Tigers were among the most legendary of our American heroes—we kids knew the names of many of the pilots—they have disappeared from the history textbooks used in our schools today.

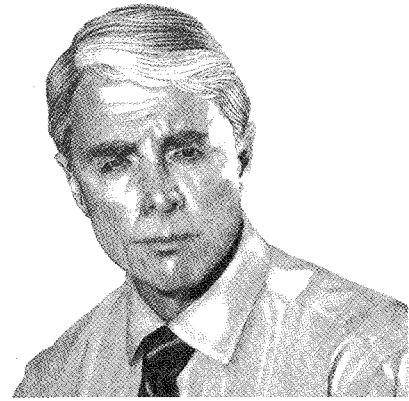
The Flying Tigers were the creation of Texas-born and Louisiana-reared Claire Chennault, a zealous and outspoken proponent of fighter aircraft, an innovator of air-combat tactics, and a daring pilot. In 1937, after serving nearly 20 years in the U.S. Army Air Corps, he retired and became an aviation advisor to Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Chinese government, and the director of the Chinese Air Force flight school in Kunming. Although Chennault worked wonders with the CAF, the Japanese had far superior forces, and by 1940 Chennault and Chiang Kai-shek asked the United States for pilots and planes. Since such direct aid was prohibited by the Neutrality Act of 1939, a clandestine operation was launched through the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company of New York.

For several years CAMCO had not only built aircraft in China but provided instructors for the CAF. Now CAMCO would hire U.S. military pilots to fly for what was called the American Volunteer Group. The U.S. government quietly allowed pilots to resign their commissions to join the AVG and then

rejoin the U.S. military at a later date with no loss of rank or seniority. The incentive to do so was money: \$600 per month for pilots, \$675 for flight leaders, and \$500 for every Japanese plane shot down—substantial sums in the early 1940’s and far more than any pilot could earn in the U.S. military. Recruitment began during the spring of 1941. By late September a hundred pilots, disguised as anything but what they were, boarded foreign merchant ships at San Francisco bound for the Orient. The alcoholic and brawling Marine aviator, Pappy Boyington, went aboard a Dutch ship as a missionary. But Japanese spies were everywhere, and Japan tracked the pilots as well as the planes, which were shipped disassembled in cargo containers, across the Pacific to their final destination, Rangoon.

The principal mission for the AVG was protecting the Burma Road, which twisted more than 700 miles through jungles and mountains from Lashio in Burma to Kunming. By 1941 it was the only landline connecting China to the outside world. Supplies would be unloaded at Rangoon and shipped by rail to Lashio. From there on it was the dirt of the Burma Road, or mud when the monsoon arrived, all the way to Kunming. The Japanese were determined to close the road and strangle an exhausted China.

For two months the AVG pilots trained at Toungoo, a remote airstrip north of Rangoon. The weather was miserable, and accidents were frequent. The pilots grumbled, and several quit; a few died in crashes. Spirits were lifted when Erik Shilling, a former Army test pilot, got the idea of painting a shark’s mouth on the P-40. A German squadron operating in the Mediterranean had first used the image on their Messerschmitts. When Shilling chalked out the mouth on the P-40, though, it looked far better than anything seen before, as if plane and design had been made for each oth-



er. Once paint was applied, the pilots were thrilled. “Looks mean as hell,” declared R.T. Smith, who would knock nine Japanese planes out of the sky. By the end of November the pilots were divided into three squadrons: the 1st, Adam & Eves; the 2nd, Panda Bears; and the 3rd, Hell’s Angels. They would be stationed at both Kunming and at Mingaladon airfield near Rangoon.

Although many have the impression that the Flying Tigers were fighting the Japanese before Pearl Harbor, the AVG’s first combat action didn’t come until December 20, when a handful of pilots from the 1st and 2nd squadrons intercepted ten enemy planes intent on bombing Kunming. The Flying Tigers immediately began to earn their moniker, aggressively diving on the Japanese and destroying four of their planes. A much bigger air battle would erupt over Rangoon on December 23 and continue through Christmas Day. No more than a dozen Tigers were in the air at any one time, but they pounced on wave after wave of Japanese formations with a vengeance, blowing 18 enemy planes out of the sky and damaging dozens more.

By the time the Flying Tigers were disbanded on July 4, 1942, they had destroyed nearly 300 Japanese planes, and men such as Bob Neale, Tex Hill, Chuck Older, Mac McGarry, Whitey Lawlor, and Charlie Bond were becoming legends. Although badly outnumbered in nearly every engagement, the Tigers lost only 16 of their pilots to enemy actions. When asked if he ever regretted joining the AVG, R.T. Smith replied wryly, “Only on those occasions when I was being shot at.” ◀

Race and Racism

A Brief History

by Tom Landess

Today, many Americans presume that the debate over slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries turned on the question of race. Though race was an ingredient in the Great Debate, it was no more than a pinch of salt. Both proponents and opponents of slavery tended to hold the same view of blacks. The superiority of the white race was a given from colonial times to long after the passage of the 13th and 14th amendments.

In 1784, Thomas Jefferson clearly believed in white supremacy. In a segment of *Notes on the State of Virginia* often cited as an illustration of his opposition to slavery, he wrote,

Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior; as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.

Abraham Lincoln took great care in his ongoing quarrel with Stephen Douglas to suggest the ways in which he believed blacks to be inferior to whites. In 1857, in a speech criticizing the *Dred Scott* decision, he said,

I think the authors of [the Declaration of Independence] intended to include all men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal in all respects. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness, in what respects they did consider all men created equal—equal in “certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

In 1858, he said the following during the first Lincoln-Douglas debate:

I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid

their living together upon the footing of perfect equality; and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position.

This statement should come as no surprise to students of history. Lincoln was a man of his time and place. Just five years earlier, Illinois had passed legislation prohibiting any black immigration into the state. It was the third such Illinois statute directed against blacks *per se*. These laws, motivated by intense racial animosity, were common in the territories and newer states.

By the turn of the next century, much of the comment on race came from the South. In 1900, Benjamin “Pitchfork Ben” Tillman—whose statue, a gift in part of the South Carolina Democratic Party, broods over the State House in Columbia—said in a speech to the U.S. Senate,

We of the South have never recognized the right of the negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be equal to the white man, and we will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and daughters without lynching him. I would to God the last one of them was in Africa and that none of them had ever been brought to our shores.

All three men believed blacks were less intelligent than whites. All three advocated shipping blacks back to Africa rather than allowing them to remain among whites to “amalgamate” or “mongrelize” the races. And all three accepted without question the same stereotypical view of blacks—one that, until the second half of the 20th century, supported *de jure* segregation in the South and parts of the North, *de facto* segregation elsewhere.

While Tillman presumed to speak for white Southerners in his diatribe, throughout the body of the speech he suggested that senators representing the rest of the country shared the same prejudices. Indeed, he made this point with a smug sense of superiority, as if to say, “We are open and honest about our racial attitudes. You aren’t.”

In fact, when the second Ku Klux Klan was organized in 1915, Northern states led the nation in recruitment. Here are the top five states in number of members, as reported in Kenneth T. Jackson’s *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-*

Contributing editor Tom Landess is the author of numerous books, a few of which have appeared under his name.

1930, the period in which the Klan was at the height of its political power: Indiana, 240,000; Ohio, 195,000; Texas, 190,000; Pennsylvania, 150,000; and Illinois, 95,000. (In 2009, estimates of Klan membership hover around 5,000.)

Today, no senator, Northern or Southern, would admit to membership in an overtly racist organization or publicly endorse white supremacy. If he did, he might well be expelled from the Senate. Indeed, racism is now the greatest of all political sins, and the N-word has replaced the F-word as the most obscene utterance in the language.

The foundation for this change was laid in 1948, when a group of liberal Democrats captured their party's national convention and, with a series of high-decibel speeches, made civil rights the focal issue of the campaign. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., of New York; Blair Moody of Michigan; and Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota led the charge, excoriating the South for its racism and Jim Crow laws, capturing the high ground for the liberal wing of the party.

Strom Thurmond, then the Democratic governor of South Carolina, led 35 Southern delegates out of the convention and formed a third party, known by its nickname, the Dixiecrats. Seeing a fragmented Democratic Party, the far left formed yet a fourth party, the Progressives, and nominated former Vice President Henry Wallace, called Old Bubblehead because of his dreamy vision of a socialist America. Harry Truman, who fell into the NONE OF THE ABOVE category, ran on the civil-rights platform the convention had handed him—and won, to the surprise of just about everybody. Thus, the 1948 convention may well have signaled a new era, one in which the charge of “racism” played an increasingly important role in the political debate.

As Americans entered the second half of the 20th century, some Southern politicians were still defending *de jure* segregation, arguing that whites should not be forced to attend school with blacks, sit next to them in buses, drink out of the same water fountain, and eat at the same lunch counters. The implication of these Jim Crow laws was clear to both races: The law was affirming the superiority, and therefore the supremacy, of the white race. In that sense, legalized segregation may have been more mean-spirited than slavery, since it mandated an artificial separation of the races to protect the sensibilities of white folks.

It is interesting to note that, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Tom's second benevolent Southern master, Augustine St. Clare, defends the institution of slavery but reproves Ophelia, his New England abolitionist cousin, for her aversion to blacks, which is so strong that she feels uncomfortable in their presence and avoids their touch. In Mrs. Stowe's novel, then, it is the Yankee whose sensibilities are offended. Stowe was not the last writer to take the measure of Northern racism. (By the way, Simon Legree was a transplanted Northerner.)

The second and more important change in racial poli-

tics occurred when Congress passed the 1964 Voting Rights Act, which effectively ended the Democrats' disenfranchisement of blacks in the South. Suddenly, they were allowed to vote in the primary where “nomination was tantamount to election”—and with the Department of Justice standing behind them, pistols cocked.

A lot of Southern politicians were caught off base. Those who had ritualistically demonized “nigras” and “niggers” saw the Democratic precincts flooded with black voters. Like Old Pharaoh, many politicians got drowned. Others, like Strom Thurmond and George Wallace, turned on a dime and began to reach out to the black community—hiring black staff members and delivering sides of pork to black constituents. Within a nanosecond of the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1964, the Democratic Party in the South began denouncing Republicans as the party of racism and reaction. At last, Northern and Southern Democrats were on the same page again, singing as one harmonious choir for the first time since 1895.

And it worked. Sort of. Blacks flocked to the Democratic Party, despite the fact that between 1876 and 1964 the GOP had been the welcome wagon of Southern blacks, who were the beneficiaries of what little patronage Republicans had to offer.

However, the change ultimately proved an electoral setback for the Democrats. The essentially conservative nature of the Republican Party, coupled with the fierce anti-Southern rhetoric of Northern Democrats—which impugned the moral integrity of every man, woman, and newborn baby in the region—drove millions of white voters into the ranks of the GOP, once hated by Southerners as the architect of Reconstruction.

Liberal Democrats saw this shift as proof that Nixon's so-called Southern Strategy was an appeal to the South's inimitable racism—the true motive, they argued, for every conservative dissent to the inevitable march of America toward statism. Thus, criticism of Obama has become for left-leaning ideologues an expression of racial bigotry, whatever the stated motive.

Actress Janeane Garofalo, appearing on Keith Olbermann's show, called those who demonstrated against Obama's agenda “a bunch of teabagging rednecks,” and then added that “this is about hating a black man in the White House. This is racism straight up.”

Colbert King, a *Washington Post* columnist, wrote, “There's something loose in the land, an ugliness and hatred directed toward Barack Obama, the nation's first African American president, that takes the breath away.”

And Maureen Dowd, writing in the *New York Times*, said of Rep. Joe Wilson's now-famous outburst,

Surrounded by middle-aged white guys—a sepia snapshot of the days when such pols ran Washington like their own men's club—Joe Wilson yelled “You lie!” at a president who didn't.

But, fair or not, what I heard was an unspoken word in the air: You lie, boy! . . .

This president is the ultimate civil rights figure—a black man whose legitimacy is constantly challenged by a loco fringe.

For generations, genteel Southerners would bow their heads in shame at accusations of this sort. Today, many of them, examining such extravagant illogic, have come to reject the stereotyping of their region and its citizens—and to regard Garofalo, King, and Dowd as irrelevant airheads, not because the South is free of racism, but because it is more so than other parts of the country.

In addition, black scholars, like Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (who recently complained about racism in Boston), have questioned the myth of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator and of the North as the savior of the black race—as did Frederick Douglass more than 100 years ago. Suddenly, the history of the question has become more complicated—and, consequently, a little less important.

More to the point, tens of thousands of blacks who have little contact with formal history are expressing their own dissent in opinion and in behavior. Several years ago a Gallup Poll found that in only one region did a majority of blacks believe they were treated equally: the South. A Harvard study reported that in only one region did a majority of white children attend integrated schools: the South. And the 2000 Census revealed that, in recent decades, more blacks have moved into the South than out of the South, while the reverse is true in all other regions. If you had only facts to guide you, you might well conclude that the Northeast is the citadel of racism in America—and you might be right.

Thus will it be increasingly difficult for leftist Democrats to sustain the myth of rampant Southern racism and to explain electoral losses in the region on this factor.

In the recent past, it has been relatively easy to play the race card. Here are some fresh comments gleaned from the airways by Rush Limbaugh:

CAMPBELL BROWN: (music) . . . vicious, racist imagery attacking our first African-American president.

LAWRENCE O'DONNELL: (newsroom noise)
Gentleman Joe Wilson has done much to make the racist history of South Carolina jump back into our present consciousness.

CANDY CROWLEY: (b-roll) Critics think this is about resistance to a black man as president.

JAMES CARVILLE: People are upset with President Obama because of the color of his skin. Who cannot believe that?

CHRIS MATTHEWS: Could there be a refusal to accept the legitimacy of Barack Obama as president

because of his race?

WOLF BLITZER: A small but disturbing minority within the tea party movement is also blatantly anti-black.

JOHN RIDLEY: When you talk about racial image, this is not just standard debate.

ELAINE QUIJANO: (b-roll) A small but passionate minority is also voicing what some see as racist rhetoric.

JOHN AVLON: Hitler. Communism. Racism. All this ugliness is bubbling up.

ANDERSON COOPER: There is an undercurrent of racism in some of the criticism of the president.

And remember that Trent Lott lost his position as Senate majority leader because, at Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party, he paid the old man a meaningless compliment:

I want to say this about my state. When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years either.

Lott was no segregationist. He wasn't even a strong defender of his state's cultural conservatism. In the House and Senate he was a trimmer—a dealmaker who could reach across the aisle when principle was on the block. He was the last person to suggest that segregation was anything but wicked. As a Mississippian, he knew better. If, in his little speech, he meant anything at all, he was referring to Thurmond's fiscal conservatism and his support of a strong military. Lott's fellow senators and President Bush knew what kind of cautious animal he was. Yet they forced him to surrender his leadership post anyway—because a charge of racism, however farfetched, was still the hydrogen bomb of political warfare.

Despite these frantic accusations the charge of racism is bound to lose its power to wound and destroy in the years immediately ahead. After all, Americans have elected a black president, so the nation can't be too racist, can it? And if—like a pair of French fops in the court of Louis XIV—the Reverend Jesse and the Reverend Al continue to make a profession of getting their feelings hurt, then it will be easier and easier to brush them off like a couple of houseflies. We may even be approaching a time when charges of racism will seem as bland and dull as unsalted oatmeal, when even the *New York Times* will read Maureen Dowd's name-calling, clear the phlegm from its magisterial throat, and yawn.

But we're not there yet.



Saving French in Quebec

When Language Isn't Enough

by Luc Gagnon



In 1976, when the separatist Parti Québécois (PQ) won the majority of seats in Quebec's National Assembly, giving it control of the provincial government, many thought that the party's goal was to save French culture and the French language in Canada. It is, however, much more complicated than that.

The PQ was founded in 1967 by the ex-Liberal minister René Lévesque. It espoused three principles: social democracy, "sovereignty association" (a separate government that maintains economic ties with Canada), and the preservation of the French language. But the Parti Québécois was not a nationalist party created to separate Quebec from the rest of Canada. The charismatic Lévesque had served as a war correspondent in France and Germany during World War II, and his experience of Nazism turned him against nationalist movements.

The PQ sought to establish a secular modern state defined by "civic nationalism," not a state linked to a specific ethnic group. A few months after taking power, the PQ passed Bill 101, *La charte de la langue française* (The Charter of the French Language). The Liberal government's Bill 22 (1974) had declared French to be the only official language of Quebec, but this law had been challenged by McGill University legal scholars as a violation of the British North America Act (1867), which made English an official language of Canada, and the Official Languages Act of 1969, which guaranteed bilingualism. The PQ's Bill 101 reaffirmed Bill 22's elevation of French as *the* official lan-

guage of Quebec. It mandated that all commercial signs be in French and that all francophone and non-English-speaking children go to French-speaking elementary and high schools. The historic English-speaking minority of Quebec, around 20 percent of the population, could keep its institutions, schools, and hospitals, but these could be used only by members of the English-speaking community. The hysteria among anglophones in Quebec that followed the passage of this bill led to an exodus of hundreds of thousands of citizens to Toronto or New York. Many important businesses also left Montreal for Toronto, increasing the demographic and economic gap between the two cities. (While both had the same population in 1960, Toronto now has twice that of Montreal.)

The PQ minister of culture, Dr. Camille Laurin, was the author of much of Bill 101. Some extremist members of the PQ plainly wanted to abolish the English-speaking schools and hospitals, as did the great orator of the separatist movement, Pierre Bourgault. But Lévesque, who felt some sympathy for the English-speaking community, threatened to resign as leader if the PQ adopted such a hard line. Lévesque was perfectly bilingual, raised in an English-speaking village of the Gaspésie. He had a great admiration for the Americans, who had, after all, won World War II, as well as for their democratic institutions. However, Laurin convinced Lévesque to accept Bill 101 in order to maintain the unity of the party and the government.

Before 1976, most immigrants—Jews, Greeks, Italians—would, upon arrival, join the English-speaking community of Montreal. The French Canadians were

Luc Gagnon is the Paris correspondent for Égards, published in Quebec.

able to hold firm even in metropolitan Montreal, the only large city of the province, because of their high birthrate and increasing rural migration. By 1976 the Baby Boom had long been over, and PQ intellectuals, anticipating the loss of French at the hands of a new burgeoning English-speaking population, wanted immigrants to join the French-speaking community. This is why the provision forcing non-English-speakers to attend francophone schools was so important.

The PQ did not, however, care much about history and the traditional culture of French Canadians. That culture was too clerical, too Catholic, too rural, too antistate. One French Canadian historian, Michel Brunet, had declared in the 1960's that the three principles of French-Canadian history had always been "agriculturism, anti-statism and messianism." This was the opposite of the modern "Québécois," the modern "non-ethnic" name for French Canadians that appeared around the same time. In the new school system implemented by the Liberal government in 1960, history, literature, Greek, and Latin were not deemed important anymore; the humanities (taught by priests for three centuries) were no longer relevant. The new school system was functionalist and pragmatic, emphasizing science, much like an American high school. The PQ continued this policy after 1976.

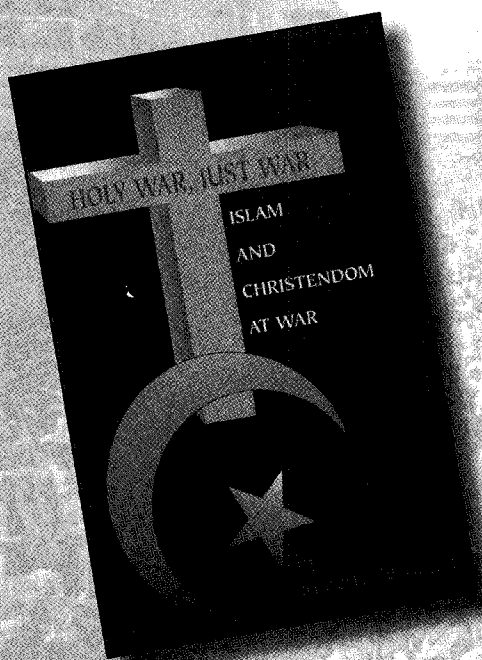
By the 1970's, the French Canadian identity was in crisis. Although the PQ government force-fed the population with French, it was little concerned with the quality of

the language. The PQ had successfully made French the sacred cow of Quebec, but it did not defend Quebec's culture, its tradition, its history, or its Roman Catholic religion. In the late 1970's, the Canadian government accepted an agreement with the PQ allowing Quebec to create a point system to determine which new immigrants it would accept. French-speakers were awarded more points. Thus, the French language effectively became the sole determining cultural criterion for admission to Quebec. In the 1980's, numerous immigrants from Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria began to arrive in French Canada, and they continue to come.

Last September, at the beginning of the new academic year, the *Journal de Montréal* announced that a majority of students in Montreal public high schools now speak English or a foreign language. A majority of them will go to college and university in English and will join the English-speaking community. Some PQ militants, including ex-premier Bernard Landry, now argue that French should be mandated in Quebec's colleges as well.

With massive immigration, on the one hand, and the low birthrate of French Canadians after 1980 (fewer than 1.5 children per woman), on the other, it is clear that language laws are not enough. Only a moral and intellectual reform of the French Canadian nation, one that would strengthen families, recover the national and educational tradition, and improve the quality of French, can "save French" in North America. ◊

FROM CHRONICLES PRESS



Holy War, Just War

Islam and Christendom at War

by Roberto de Mattei

"The term 'clash of civilizations' is not a palatable one in political and media circles," writes Roberto de Mattei, but it is the only proper framework for understanding how the fundamental theological differences between Christianity and Islam inform the way their adherents wage war. In this important work, he explains these differences with careful scholarship and defends with eloquence the "lawfulness of war against an enemy who is attacking the West, with the aim of establishing a moral and social order that is radically opposed to our history and tradition."

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Social Security's Coming Crash

The Certain End of Entitlement

by Doug Bandow

The welfare state was born in Otto von Bismarck's Germany, a ploy of the famed Iron Chancellor designed to counter the electoral appeal of the rival Social Democrats. Thus, social security was created in 1889 and eventually spread, under several guises, to many nations.

Here, the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program (Social Security) was approved in 1935, an early victory for Franklin Delano Roosevelt as he rapidly and dramatically expanded government control over the economy. For FDR, Social Security's most important benefit was political: He recognized that once the American people got hooked on government benefits, they would never go back.

He was right.

Although Social Security has long been viewed as the third rail of American politics—touch it and die—it really is better seen as a symbol of America's entitlement culture. The United States lags behind Europe but nevertheless has constructed an expensive and expansive welfare state. Virtually all spending programs go up each year, regardless of which party controls Washington, and the most outlandish increases have been concentrated in the big three social-welfare systems: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

The challenge of paying for the welfare state has grown over the last year.

U.S. GDP is about \$14 trillion. One year of economic output already is committed to paying off the national debt, which is now above \$12 trillion and climbing fast.

Washington is running a deficit of \$1.6 trillion this year and is expected to pile up another ten trillion in debt over the next decade. In fact, these estimates are low: Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the FDIC, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, the Federal Housing Administration, and who knows what else continue to run up big losses and will need more bailouts. So count another year's production toward the federal debt.

Then there is all of the funny money used to fund the estimated \$13 trillion in bailouts doled out over the last year. Some of the cash, such as the so-called TARP money (the financial-institutions bailout that somehow was

used to nationalize the auto industry), was appropriated by Congress. But between the Treasury Department and Federal Reserve there have also been loans, guarantees, and money creation. It is hard to know what it ultimately will mean in financial terms, but another year of America's economic life will certainly be lost.

Finally, there are Social Security and Medicare. Together, they have about \$107 trillion in "unfunded liabilities." In real-people-speak, that is the difference between promised benefits and expected revenues. That amounts to about eight years of America's economic production and twice the world's annual GDP.

Social Security and Medicare are disastrously unbalanced for three reasons. First, "contributions" to Social Security and Medicare are insufficient to provide the promised benefits. Indeed, Social Security operates as a classic Ponzi scheme, with new contributions used to pay off earlier "investors."

Second, life expectancy is up, and fertility rates are down. The population is aging, with a larger number of elderly living longer. This is good news for people but bad news for Uncle Sam.

Third, medical outlays are increasing rapidly. In recent decades Medicare outlays have risen three percent annually above the increase in *per capita* GDP. Since the elderly consume far more healthcare services than younger Americans do, this factor compounds the impact of demography.

Even before last fall's financial crash, then-comptroller general David M. Walker warned, "The only thing the United States is able to do a little after 2040 is pay interest on massive and growing federal debt. The model blows up in the mid-2040s. What does that mean? Argentina."

Insolvency is not the only problem facing Social Security. The system is essentially stealing from those now entering the workforce.

The rate of return was good for early recipients because they had low payroll tax rates and paid in only for a few years. The very first recipient, Miss Ida May Fuller, contributed (herself and through her employer) just \$49.50 in payroll taxes before she retired at age 65. She lived to 100 and collected \$22,888.92 in benefits. Although not all early recipients made out so handsomely, many beneficiaries received back their lifetime Social Security "contribution" in months rather than years.

But as the number of workers per retiree has fallen—

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from 42-to-1 in 1940 to about 3-to-1 today, on the way to below 2-to-1—the tax rate has risen dramatically. Many people of modest means pay more in Social Security deductions than they pay in income taxes. Increasing numbers of young workers now will lose money, assuming there is money available to pay for their benefits when they retire.

Almost every proposed “reform” scheme would further drive down the system’s return, increasing taxes while cutting benefits. The program has become the worst sort of fool’s bargain—at least for everyone but the politicians who take credit for handing out money to a pliant population.

Last fall’s stock-market collapse demonstrates that private markets offer no guarantees. But that uncertainty should be contrasted with the certain bad deal from the federal government. Moreover, the return on private investment has remained well above the levels for Social Security even when measured against major stock-market downturns. The rate of return was over three percent annually, handily beating Social Security’s return these days, for even the worst 20-year period in American history, which encompasses the Great Depression.

Furthermore, Social Security’s nominal rate of return needs to be discounted by its negative impact on the economy. The program reduces both the amount of money available for workers to save and their incentive to save. By diminishing the resources available for economic investment, Social Security reduces both GDP and real wages in future years. Estimates of that loss range from five to ten percent. Integrating that impact into current rates of return makes today’s average return negative.

Advocates of Social Security claim that it benefits low-income recipients, but Social Security actually discriminates against women, minorities, and anyone else with a shorter life expectancy. Moreover, the program was developed for two-parent, single-earner households. Under the current rules, two-earner couples, singles, and young divorcees—an ever-larger share of the population—are at a disadvantage.

Social Security is more than just a financial bad deal. The program undermines personal responsibility by discouraging saving and encouraging early retirement. Equally damaging, Social Security shifts the duty of caring for our elders to the government. As a result, many Americans end up dependent—a substantial number almost wholly dependent—on government.

Social Security discourages private saving in two ways. First, it takes money that otherwise would be invested in economically productive private activities and dumps it into the Treasury (the “trust fund” is a political fraud) for redistribution by Washington. This year about \$560 billion is disappearing into Uncle Sam’s porous pocket.

Second, creating a government retirement system makes private saving less necessary. Social Security reduces investment, economic productivity, job creation, and overall growth. Harvard’s Martin Feldstein figures

that Social Security “benefits replace more than 80 percent of peak preretirement after-tax income. Common sense and casual observation suggest that individuals who can expect such a high replacement rate will do little saving for their retirement.” The financial crisis has exacerbated this tendency: More than one third of those between 45 and 54 have stopped contributing to private retirement accounts.

Social Security almost certainly has had a deeper social impact. The program creates a powerful incentive for earlier retirement. Obviously, people may retire whenever they desire and can afford to do so. But it is foolish for Washington to push people into retirement. The National Center for Policy Analysis reports that since the program’s beginning the percentage of men over 65 who work has dropped by half. The work-participation rate fell as Social Security covered more men and delivered greater benefits.

The program also has transformed the workplace. The payroll tax directly penalizes employment, discouraging job creation. For the average family, writes Feldstein, Social Security “raises the total marginal tax rate to more than 40 percent and substantially exacerbates the distortions and waste caused by the income tax.” The levy also influences choices on how many hours to work and how to structure compensation—emphasizing untaxed fringe and nonpecuniary benefits. This is a particularly perverse incentive for a government pension system funded through employment. Penalizing workers means that people will work and save less, and retire sooner. In turn, there will be fewer workers to support each retiree. This reduction in the number of workers per beneficiary is the principal reason Social Security is rapidly approaching collapse.

The change wrought by Social Security is not just economic but philosophical. Children now see the government rather than the family as having primary responsibility for providing retirement security. And retirees believe the government “owes” them their Social Security benefits. (In fact, the Supreme Court has ruled that Uncle Sam has no legal obligation to pay.)

Intergenerational ties are often difficult to maintain, but they are among the strongest bonds of community. The ultimate result of social welfare is, as Chancellor Bismarck intended, to encourage widespread dependency on the state. America’s Founding Fathers feared this possibility. As Thomas Jefferson put it, “Dependence begets subservience and venality.”

The imminent collapse of Social Security adds another element to the studied campaign to make people dependent. Never mind that successive presidents and Congresses have promised to protect the elderly. Never mind that policymakers have discouraged Americans from preparing for their own retirement. Never mind traditional notions of commitment, trust, and honor. Uncle Sam will leave everyone high and dry without even a glance backward.

We must confront the welfare state and the entitlement mentality that underlies it. To do that, we must transform

Social Security.

The longer we wait, the more difficult it becomes to close the gap. Last year was particularly bad because of the economic crunch; the total unfunded liability for Social Security and Medicare grew by nearly six billion dollars. Reforms are hardest to apply to those who have already retired: "Delaying action until the baby boom is in full retirement insures that the next generation will bear the burden of current inaction," argue Andrew J. Rettenmaier and Thomas R. Saving of the Private Enterprise Research Center at Texas A&M University.

And that cost will be huge. David M. Walker observes that

Failure to take steps to address our large and struc-

tural long-range fiscal imbalance, which is driven in large part by projected increases in Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security spending, will ultimately have significant adverse consequences for our future economy and the quality of life of our children, grandchildren, and future generations of Americans. As a result, the federal government needs to engage in a fundamental review, reassessment, and reprioritization that will ultimately have to span all major spending programs and tax policies.

Perhaps economic reality will finally force Congress to act. For Social Security has become the reverse third rail of government finance: *Don't touch it, and America's economy dies.* 

Bellerophon

by James Graves

If I had been assigned a winged steed
And lofty station as great Bellerophon
Once was, I hope I would have been content
To stay at home and dart about patrolling
The marches of my towering estate,
And not go aviating off to slay
Chimeras or occasional amazons,
And certainly not plotting how to try
And rise above my elevated place.
Bellerophon's high gifts, you understand,
Went to his giddy head and overthrew him:
So that we should commiserate—we folk
Without advantages inciting us
To vie as he did that climactic day
When seeming mastery of earth put him
In mind to rule in heaven and he soared,
Astride the brutish prodigy uprising,
Until he was astounded, amid the mighty
Pounding of the equine winds against
The yielding air, to find himself in a flash
Precipitated, and in those headlong final
Moments (as I imagine) lowly wise.

How the West Was Restored

He had finally done it. He had mastered the physics of time. He was ready to visit the past.

He had made his first fortune in U.S. Treasury bond futures in the early 1980's. Wall Street had thought that the Reagan tax cuts would drive up interest rates because of budget deficits. But he knew that the deficits were a result of the unanticipated collapse in the rate of inflation, and, thus, as the deficits were caused by disinflation, the deficits could not cause inflation. In those days \$60,000 could tie up a million dollars in Treasury bonds, and he had made many times \$60,000 on the speaking circuit after leaving the government. Buying futures contracts when Wall Street thought double-digit interest rates were forever was a surefire path to riches.

He made his second fortune on the collapse of the dollar and the end of its role as the world's reserve currency. The free-trade economists and the Washington policymakers thought that the offshoring of U.S. jobs brought benefits to America and strengthened the dollar. He almost alone understood that offshoring turned U.S. GDP into imports and would crush the dollar. His first fortune went into hedges against the coming decline in the dollar.

When the dollar finally tanked, he was a very rich man.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, he had rescued a Russian physicist from penury. The Russian shared his daydreams of time travel, and one day in their banter of how it could be done they hit on the solution. It came to them both at the same time, and now they were about to change history.

As a reader of Louis L'Amour's westerns he had come to respect the American Indians. When he finished reading Joseph M. Marshall's *Hundred in the Hand* about the Lakota Sioux, he wished that white "civilization" had been halted at the Mississippi and

that the Western United States still belonged to the native Indians, wild animals, and clean water.

Now he was going to enable the Indians to halt the white man at the Mississippi.

It had been difficult and time-consuming, but he had amassed 10,000 M-14 rifles; 5 million rounds of ammunition; 1,000 mortars with 100,000 rounds; 10,000 rocket-propelled grenades; and 1,000 Kevlar vests, helmets, and face shields.

He and the Russian, who hated the communists for polluting the wide-open spaces of the Soviet Union, had mastered enough of the language of the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Crow, Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, and Ute to teach them military tactics and the use of these weapons from the gods.

The first rule was that there would be no more fighting among themselves. If the Indians did not understand who was the real enemy, the gods would swiftly destroy them. If they failed in their duty to prevent any white man from crossing the Mississippi River and surviving, the gods would annihilate them. The Indians had never seen such power. It was like controlling the thunder and lightning of the gods. That it was coming into their hands made them obedient.

The second rule was that fighting would no longer be a matter of individual honor to "make coup." It was to annihilate the enemy at no loss of life to the Indians. With the weapons the gods had delivered, getting killed was a disgrace, a sign of stupidity rather than bravery.

The third rule was that no weapon must be lost to the whites, or they would learn to copy it and to produce their own, thus depriving the Indians of their advantage.

The M-14s could cut the whites down before their own weapons came into range. If the whites took cover,



the mortars drove them out into withering fire.

The first cavalry detachment of 300 troops was destroyed in three minutes.

Boats intending to cross the Mississippi never made it off the opposite shore.

The Kevlar protection was for work within the whites' rifle range. The Indians understood that a shot from too close a range could knock them down and break a rib, but that penetration into the flesh was unlikely. In close encounters the whites fled when they saw that the Indians were bulletproof.

Washington sent three frigates by sea to California. When they arrived, they were sunk by RPGs. No word ever reached Washington.

Knowing only single-shot rifles, the whites imagined their adversaries to number in the hundreds of thousands. Nothing less could explain the firepower. The whites began building forts along the eastern side of the Mississippi to repel invasion. The word was sent to the whites that they would be tolerated only if they remained east of the Mississippi.

With the West saved from the avarice that lives in the white man's heart, he and the Russian turned their thoughts to the East. A century or two further back in time, and the white man could be eliminated from North America. The closer they arrived to 1620, the easier it would be.

The Iroquois were quick learners.

Under the Black Flag

by Taki Theodoracopulos

Breakfast With Bin Laden

I sat down to write this column in the Big Bagel, as I call New York City, and it was to be about the latest hagiography of Winston Churchill, a man I not only dislike but consider to be a war criminal *par excellence*. Then I heard the sirens outside my house and was deafened by the helicopters hovering up above. It was terrorist time, except that all the cops were out in force protecting the bad guys and escorting them to various grand hotels and diplomatic missions scattered around this great city.

Yes, you guessed it, dear readers, it was the opening session of Crooks & Murderers, Inc., a.k.a. the United Nations. Never have so many tin-pot dictators, major chisellers, lunch-bucket pilferers, and out-and-out killers arrived *en masse* as they did this year, and it was my bad luck to find myself in close proximity to the rabble. Central Park was closed to joggers as the French head hobbit, one Sarkozy, decided to take some exercise. Ditto for certain parts of Park Avenue, as African child molesters needed to go shopping to spend some of their blood money. Every single cop was out in force trying to make life miserable for us taxpayers and comfortable for the onanists from the Dark Continent. That's when I lost all desire to abuse the Churchill man and decided to tell you about the world's most wanted man—the only one, in fact, who's missing from the vermin who have overrun the place. None other than Osama bin Laden himself.

It was around 1998, and as usual I was stuck for a column. I was in Gstaad, sitting in my garden and looking out at the magnificent mountains, when it came to me. Why not make a bit of trouble for the draft dodger at the White House, just as he was being deposed about Monica Lewinsky? So I sat down and wrote about Osama bin Laden—Harry, as we friends of his called him—a man who had gone to

the Rosey school with my son and who now lived quietly at the Palace Hotel in Gstaad, in the Kandahar suite, just down the road from my humble chalet. Harry was very rich, but, unlike most of his kind, he was extremely generous. At the famous White's club in London, he was known for his generosity and for always picking up the tab at the bar for the rest of the swells. The English upper classes are notorious for being slow on the trigger when it comes to coughing up, so Harry was by far the most popular of members. He dressed at Anderson & Sheppard, the bespoke tailors who cut his burnoose in the finest silks. His sandals were made to measure by Lobb, and his beard trimmed weekly by Trumper's. He had been proposed as member by the duke of Beaufort and seconded by Lord Charles Churchill, great-nephew of Sir Winston.

But there was more. Harry Laden had gone to Rosey and had been a member of the best ski team ever, which included J.T. Theodoracopulos, Jean-Claude Killy, Gianni Agnelli, Sir Arnold Lunn, and William F. Buckley, Jr. Harry was a quiet sort of person, disappearing at times for long periods, but always resurfacing around Ramadan and other religious holidays, except for Yom Kippur. When I finished the column I e-mailed it to *The Spectator* and waited for the call. Which came almost immediately. "I hope you're joking," said my dear and long-suffering editor Liz Anderson. Once I reassured her that I was, she breathed a sigh of relief, and the piece ran as I had written it. Then the trouble started.

For the next couple of weeks a lot of Brit journalists got hold of my number and pestered me for more information. One of them, Peter McKay, an ingenious Scot writing for the *Daily Mail*, rang up White's. "We haven't seen him lately," was the hall porter's even more ingenious reply. The hacks became convinced they were on to



a great scoop. But I wasn't talking. Then it became more serious. Graydon Carter, editor in chief of *Vanity Fair* and a good friend of long standing, called me and insisted I spill the beans. "This will make you almost as famous as he is," was the way Graydon put it. But I stood firm. *Vanity Fair* then readied two of their greatest bloodhounds to trace Harry in Gstaad, which made me very nervous. So nervous, in fact, that I came clean. Carter is still laughing about it.

But there were consequences. At a grand dinner party in Palm Beach, after September 11, a local grande dame cut me and in a loud voice accused me of being friendly with people who had the blood of 3,000 Americans on their hands. I stammered something about a joke, but no one was listening. A member of White's demanded an apology and an admission of having lied, as he had lost clients after revealing he was a member of the club. A nice young man by the name of Johnson, known for his documentaries, approached me and asked to do a film on "The Man Who Parties With Osama." When I told him it was all a spoof he was crestfallen. "I've spent a fortune in preparing it!" he cried.

So, moral of the story: Terrorists are no joke. Mind you, after six months, and once again stuck for a story, I did a sequel, but it didn't come off. The only journalist to get it the first time was Alexander Cockburn. The ski team, said Cockburn, didn't make sense. Buckley and Taki's son could not have been in school together, unless the former was retarded, which he was not. Good for you, Sherlock. ◊

It's the Culture, Stupid!

by Tom Piatak

"Karl Marx was a mighty prophet."

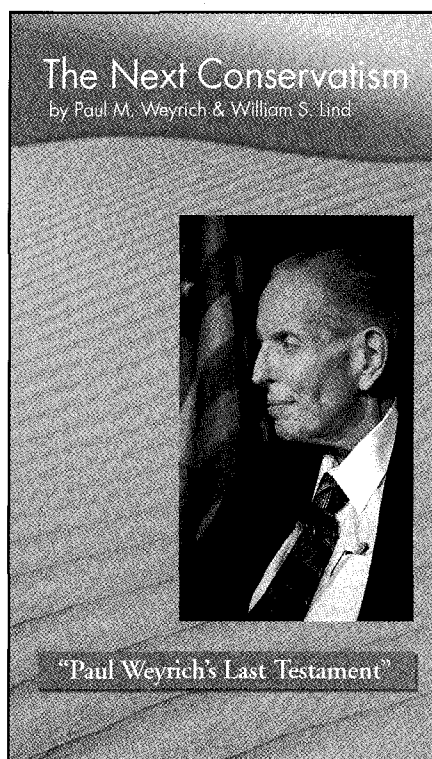
—George Bernard Shaw

The Next Conservatism
by Paul M. Weyrich
and William S. Lind
South Bend: St. Augustine's Press;
160 pp., \$24.00



Following the failure of the neocon-laden Bush administration and the neocon-led McCain campaign, it is clear that whatever the American right is doing is not working. A variety of authors have offered a variety of explanations to bewildered American conservatives of what went wrong and where to go from here. The best of these efforts is *The Next Conservatism*, authored by Paul Weyrich (who died before the book was published) and his long-time colleague, William Lind. Weyrich and Lind write from a traditionalist conservative perspective—they cite Russell Kirk more than they cite any other thinker—and they offer a lucid and concise summary of ideas that, while familiar to readers of *Chronicles*, will seem new and even strange to those whose idea of conservatism has been shaped by the official conservative movement and its mouthpieces: *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *Commentary*, each of which cheered as George W.

Contributing editor Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.



Melanie Anderson

Bush, in the memorable phrase of Pat Buchanan, “got a hold of the keys, got high on neocon hooch, and crashed and rolled the family SUV.”

Although the failure of Bush is the cause of much conservative soul-searching, Weyrich and Lind recognize that the rot goes much deeper. They argue that “the conservative movement must now be spoken of in the past tense. It no longer exists.” One reason for its failure is that “most Washington Republicans do not have any core beliefs, beyond believing in themselves and their right to remain members of the New Class,” and most Republicans outside Washington want nothing more than to become Republicans *inside* Washington, a city “controlled by powerful, monied interests

that feed off our nation’s decay.” Indeed, you can virtually count on one hand the number of men who have remained recognizably conservative after spending their lives in Babylon on the Potomac. (Although William Lind works in Washington, he manages to spend the summer in his native Cleveland, where I have had the pleasure of hearing him address local conservatives several times.)

Weyrich and Lind also argue that conservatism became “stagnant and inert” because “the collapse of Communism and the world-wide triumph of free market economics realized much that conservatives had worked for from the 1950s onward.” That’s the full half of the glass. The authors also recognize the empty half. By focusing so much of their energy on politics, conservatives allowed the left to gain control of American culture, a calamitous failure with far-reaching consequences:

All we have to do is look around us and compare what we see with the America of the 1950s to understand how vast the left’s victory has been. The old sins have become virtues and the old virtues have become sins.

As a result, “Reversing the decline, decay, and seemingly bottomless degradation of America’s culture must be recognized as conservatism’s most ur-

gent and difficult challenge.”

Weyrich and Lind place much of the blame for our cultural decline on what they term “cultural Marxism,” a Marxist variant shaped by Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukacs, and the Frankfurt School. That brand of Marxism held that

Western culture and the Christian religion had so blinded the working class to its “true,” Marxist class interests that Communism was impossible in the West until both could be destroyed.

As Lukacs asked, “Who will save us from Western civilization?” The answer, it turned out, was the cultural Marxists themselves. Lukacs helped show the way by introducing compulsory sex education in Hungary’s schools during the first incarnation of communist Hungary, under Béla Kun. Lukacs’s successors have busied themselves like termites ever since, eating away at the West’s confidence in itself and its heritage, with special attention to undermining traditional Christian morality: “The most powerful cause of the West’s moral dissolution is its loss of faith in the Christian religion. Culture, as Kirk said, comes from the cult.” Cultural Marxists are now ensconced in most of the institutions that used to guard and pass on the heritage of the West, including most institutions of higher learning, most public schools, and, saddest of all, even many religious institutions. The end is in sight: “A people cut off from its past, largely unable to reason and guided primarily by emotion, [who] will be easy to manipulate.” David Axelrod could not have put it any better.

Given the success of cultural Marxism, Weyrich and Lind argue that conservatives need to focus on preserving what remains of traditional culture and morality.

It is too much to call for returning society to its old moral foundations. God may accomplish that, or events, but at present it is beyond conservatives’ pow-

ers. Rather the next conservatism must seek to create a space where those of us who live according to the old rules may do so safely . . . without facing constant assault.

This involves opposing hate-crimes legislation, which attempts to criminalize dissent from political correctness. It includes focusing on the local; over and over, Weyrich and Lind repeat the mantra, “Think locally, act locally.” It means what Weyrich and Lind term “Retroculture,” an attempt to strengthen the old rules by restoring old ways of life, from the railroad trains both men love to local agriculture to the New Urbanism, which calls for neighborhoods to be zoned as they used to be, allowing people to live within walking distance of the things they need, neighbors to get to know one another, and “the peer pressure to do the right thing instead of the wrong . . .” It encompasses supporting homeschooling and turning our backs on popular culture, which poses a greater threat than government to traditional morality as it spews forth filth “in a Niagara-like torrent.” It means looking critically at “video screen technologies,” from television (“the Devil’s baby-sitter”) to video games to computers tied to the internet, which threaten to turn us into a “post-literate culture” and to replace the word—the *Logos* of both the Gospel of John and of Greek philosophy—with the image as the focal point of our culture. What Weyrich and Lind hope to do is eventually to restore a

common culture . . . based on middle-class values that begin with delayed gratification and include the merit of hard work, education, saving, life-time marriage, and working your way up in the world.

Much of the book is devoted to cultural matters not only because Weyrich and Lind recognize their central importance, but because they see the tasks of republican government as limited to “providing infrastructure . . . without which trade is not possi-

ble” and “national security,” a security that encompasses “moral security” and “economic security” as well as protection from our enemies abroad. With respect to national security, the authors recommend a return to the traditional American policy of nonintervention and the abolition of the Department of Homeland Security. They note that “we may need to profile on a variety of bases, including religious belief and ethnic origins,” and argue that the great division in the 21st century will be not between democracies and nondemocracies but between societies that are ordered and those that are disordered, including much of the Islamic world. In that regard,

we would leave centers and sources of disorder alone, militarily and in other ways, unless they attacked us. But if they attacked us, our response would be Roman, which is to say annihilating.

Such a policy would be much less expensive than our current attempt at *Pax Americana*, which causes us to spend “as much on defense as the rest of the world put together.” The push for empire is not the result of a sober assessment of American interests but because

The huge defense and foreign policy bureaucracies the Cold War created took on a life of their own. A return to our traditional, non-interventionist foreign policy threatened to dry up their money. So they mobilized all their power to promote the idea of an American world empire. They care not at all about our liberties. Their only concern is their own jobs, power and budgets.

Mass immigration also threatens “traditional American culture.” As Weyrich and Lind bluntly state, “If we do not halt the flow of Third World immigrants into our country, all aspects of national security will be irrelevant, because soon enough we will have no

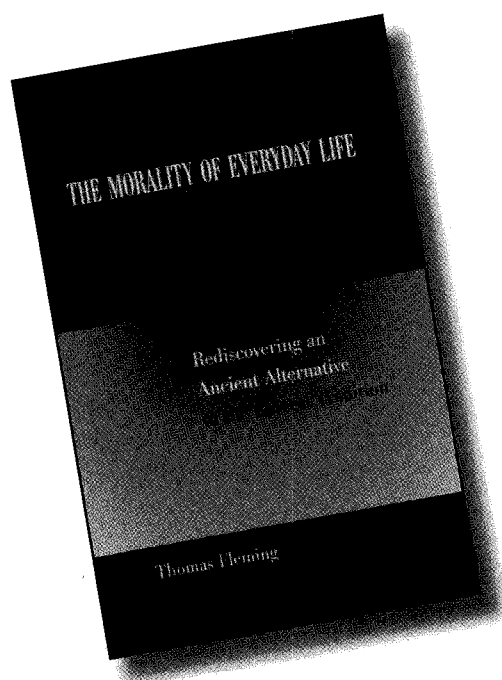
nation to secure.” The need to resist mass immigration is implied also by the authors’ conception of “economic security,” which is not a call for the welfare state but a desire to “defend traditional ways of life from Benthamite efficiency.” Libertarian ideologues are hostile to such concerns, but Weyrich and Lind correctly note that much libertarian ideology is “utilitarian, and conservative thought has rightly rejected utilitarianism since the days of poor, unhinged Jeremy Bentham.”

Blind devotion to Benthamite efficiency also threatens our manufacturing base, as outsourcing and free trade continue to shift production offshore, leaving devastated American communities in their wake. The authors oppose this trend, noting that “Most of the people who work in manufacturing are cultural conservatives” and that manufacturing is vital to the well-being of “the blue-collar middle class, a class whose existence ought to be one of our proudest national achievements.” The decline of American manufacturing portends the loss

of America’s “full economic independence,” which is important for national security and which, in fact, was part of what the Founding Fathers sought to achieve by separating us from Britain. To preserve American manufacturing, Weyrich and Lind are open to levying export duties on outsourcing and tariffs on imports; their goals might also be achieved by the border-adjusted VAT advocated in *Chronicles* by David Hartman. The authors are highly critical of the way our economy has become dependent on consumer spending and debt, observing that “A society’s real strength comes from production, saving and investment, not consumption” and that an economy based on consumer spending “is not sustainable, and it points toward a crash.” Washington’s unlimited support for the financial sector further threatens the economy, as William Quirk has repeatedly argued in these pages. Weyrich and Lind agree: “If carried far enough, privatizing profits and socializing losses make risk and debt the only sound investments.”

There is room to debate the wisdom of the policy prescriptions found in *The Next Conservatism*, though I find myself in agreement with most of them. But the book’s central point is close to uncontested: The state of the culture is more important to America’s future than the state of the economy or who sits in the White House, and the task conservatives face is therefore more daunting than the task conservatives faced in the past, when American culture was essentially healthy and the institutions that were supposed to preserve and pass along its traditions generally did. We now face the task of redeeming or replacing the institutions that have been subverted by cultural Marxism. We should continue to be engaged in the political arena and support the candidates most likely to assist in the preservation of the American nation and the gradual restoration of American culture. But the main work must be done outside the political arena, in our homes, churches, schools, neighborhoods, and communities, as *The Next Conservatism* insists. 

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The Duopolists

by William J. Quirk

Grand Illusion: The Myth of Voter Choice in a Two-Party Tyranny

by Theresa Amato

New York: The New Press;

400 pp., \$27.95



The two major parties, as Judge Richard Posner writes, “exert virtually complete control over American government.” They are what economists call a duopoly. Does the duopoly do a reasonable job of presenting candidates the people want? Is there any hope of electing a candidate favored by a majority of the American people? To find out you would have to have a ballot line for NONE OF THE ABOVE and see how well it does. We had a flawed proxy in 1992, when 19 percent of the vote went to Ross Perot. During the campaign Perot had withdrawn once from the race under strange circumstances. Presumably, few of his voters really wanted him to become president, so his 19-percent vote was a desperate protest. A pure NONE OF THE ABOVE line would not carry the baggage of a strange individual. NONE OF THE ABOVE may have won in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004. Of course, NONE OF THE ABOVE cannot govern. If he won, we would have to have another election.

Financial duopolists share a market, and both enjoy profits in excess of those available in a competitive system. They cooperate with each other rather than compete. They have no incentive to cut prices significantly since, if one starts to do so, the other will respond, and both will lose profit. Each would like to take a few points of market share from the other, but neither wants to put the other out of business. And, of course, both act to prevent any new producer who would cut prices from entering the market. Our political duopolists behave similarly. There is plenty of profit for both parties as long as they don't seriously compete—and as long as they can

prevent any third party from rising. They serve themselves, not the country. They have led the country, without full debate and without the constitutionally required declaration of war, into a series of ill-conceived wars (Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and Iraq). They have also spent money so irresponsibly that they have created a perpetual debt to burden future generations.

The shameful story, largely unreported, of the Democrats' campaign to keep Ralph Nader off the ballot in 2004 is told in a new book by Mr. Nader's campaign manager, Theresa Amato. The Democrats freely admit their harassing lawsuits were in bad faith. As Toby Moffett, leader of the ballot-access campaign against Ralph Nader, said, “We distracted and drained him of resources.” The courts, including the Supreme Court, refused to block the Democrats' scheme. Like Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his friends, the Democrats believe democracy works better if they control it.

In 2000, Mr. Nader received 2,882,955 votes. Democrats believe Mr. Nader's substantial votes in Florida were mostly taken from Al Gore, made the race a close one, and ultimately allowed the Supreme Court to steal the election in *Bush v. Gore*. The Democrats' fury, for some reason, fell on Nader rather than on Pat Buchanan, who, because of the infamous butterfly ballot, received a surprisingly high vote in Palm Beach County.

Four years later, George W. Bush and John Kerry did not differ substantially on the Iraq war—both agreed it was appropriate for the United States to invade Iraq to bring democracy to her people. As Nader had opposed the war from the start, he decided to run against them as an antiwar candidate. The 2004 presidential debates would have been an excellent opportunity to explain his views to the public. The Democrats, however, wanted not only to keep Nader out of the debates, but to keep him off the ballot. The Democrats' massive litigation campaign challenged every ballot-access signature in every state—first administratively, then in the courts. Charles Cook, an independent political an-

alyst, reported that “Democrats are making this as difficult and as debilitating for him as possible, . . . and to the extent he's tied up trying to get on ballots, he's not getting any kind of message across.”

Though the Democrats' litigation clearly was oppressive and in bad faith, Nader's efforts to win justice were rejected by the courts. Numerous circuit courts, and finally the Supreme Court, allowed the Democrats to suppress the democratic process. The party largely succeeded—they kept Nader off the ballot in four battleground states (Arizona, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania). With the help of the Republicans, they kept him out of the debates as well.

Republicans have also wielded their power to prevent ballot access to those challenging the duopoly. Pat Buchanan, running as an independent in 2000, faced a formidable Republican campaign to keep him off the ballot. Buchanan filed a formal complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC), charging that the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) conspired to exclude him. The FEC denied the complaint. Both the FEC and CPD are creatures of the duopoly. Amato notes that the FEC, created by Congress in 1974, was “designed as an independent regulatory agency.” It is made up of six commissioners, but no more than three can come from one party. As Amato writes, “the appointment and confirmation tango serves to guarantee that the commissioners are only Democrats or Republicans.” The CPD is not, as most people think, a governmental body; it is a private nonprofit organization. Amato asserts that “the two major parties created the CPD [in 1987] so they could control the presidential debate process.” The debates had previously been run by the independent League of Women Voters. Pat Buchanan, in 2000, asked why “the American people are not permitted to hear candidates whose campaign they are paying for, because a couple of political hacks are fronting for the establishment parties in Washington and freezing them out.” Ross Perot,

in 1992, was allowed into the debates only because George H.W. Bush believed, erroneously, that Perot would draw votes from Bill Clinton. Perot's strong showing, despite his bizarre behavior, frightened the duopoly so much that it has since excluded all nondupoly candidates from the debates.

The *New York Times* suggested in August 2004 that Ralph Nader could have drawn at least two or three percent of the vote in more than a dozen states where the race was close enough to alter the outcome. States have no valid interest in protecting the major parties from competition. But they do exactly that. Their various devices include setting early filing dates and requiring large numbers of signatures, strict conformity of signatures to voting rolls, and special provisions such as insisting that signature circulators be state residents. The Democrats used all of these to purge Nader from the ballot.

The Founding Fathers did not create the two-party system. As Nader writes in his Foreword to Amato's book,

Party is not mentioned in the Constitution. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, among other Founders, despised political parties, calling them "factions" bent on self-perpetuating their own narrow interests.

The Framers also did not create the Supreme Court as an alternative to democratic government. They did not dream that basic questions of social purpose and cultural values would be thinly disguised as legal issues to be decided by an unaccountable Court. But the Court does have a critical, and proper, role—that of ensuring that governmental decisions represent true democratic consensus. The Court should keep the channels of opinion and of discussion open and free. It should ensure ballot access to serious political candidates—which it spectacularly failed to do in 2004, by denying Nader's numerous petitions.

In some situations, the Court is the only governmental agency able to repair the political process when it breaks down. The two parties conclude to exert virtually complete control over the U.S. government, including the Supreme Court. The Court is the only branch that could encourage ballot access for the purpose of breaking up the duopoly. Yet since the Court is the vehicle through which the duopoly resolves internal conflict, neither camp is likely to be interested in undermining an arrangement that has placed the Court at the front and center of the modern political arena.

William J. Quirk is the author of Courts & Congress.

Don't Give Up the Ship

by Thomas Schaaf, Sr.

The Attack on the Liberty

by James Scott

New York: Simon and Schuster;
384 pp., \$27.00



From two until almost four o'clock on a sunny afternoon in June 1967, in the Eastern Mediterranean, Israeli jets and motor torpedo boats mercilessly pounded the virtually defenseless U.S.S. *Liberty*, killing 34 sailors, seriously wounding 171 (two thirds of the crew), and leaving the ship with a nine-degree list and a huge torpedo hole in the starboard side. Though still afloat, the ship was a total loss other than her scrap value in a Baltimore breaking yard, where she ended her days after slowly steaming, via a Malta dry dock, to her home port of Norfolk, Virginia.

"The specter of the *Liberty*," James Scott writes,

has haunted the U.S. Navy and intelligence community for decades. The underlying question the attack raised in 1967

still resonates: How do politics and diplomacy impact battlefield decisions? In the case of the *Liberty*, the White House, afraid of offending Israel's domestic backers at a time when it needed support for its Vietnam policy, looked the other way. Likewise, Congress failed to formally [*sic*] investigate the attack or hold public hearings. No one was ever punished.

Over the years the response from Israeli sources has been that the strike was simply a tragic accident caused by misidentification in the fog of war. Though Scott (the son of a survivor of the attack) refrains from interjecting his opinions, his many interviews and his disclosure of recently declassified documents show clearly that Israel's response is not plausible.

Soon after the event, Adm. John McCain, Jr., father of Sen. John McCain and, in 1967, commander of the Navy's European and Middle East forces, convened a court of inquiry. Scott writes,

McCain understood the geopolitical challenge . . . This was no typical collision at sea or a ship fire . . . The attack involved an American ally, one that commanded significant support from American Jews. A court of inquiry report critical of Israel would trigger diplomatic ramifications for the State Department and create domestic political trouble for the beleaguered White House, which now wanted to de-emphasize the attack.

McCain appointed RAdm. Isaac C. Kidd, Jr., president of the court but allowed it only one week to investigate, though the court's lawyer would later admit that a proper investigation would have required six months. McCain also barred the investigators from traveling to Israel to interview the attackers. The court of inquiry began its work in the *Liberty* wardroom two hours after the

ship was installed in a British navy dry dock in Malta. Scott notes that reporters had watched the *Liberty's* arrival from a nearby hillside by the Grand Harbor in Valletta, Malta, jotting notes about her riddled hull and superstructure, torched life rafts, and the torpedo hole that yawned above the waterline. That same day, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered a news blackout.

For the next year, until the *Liberty* was decommissioned in June 1968, stories and discussion about the attack on the ship diminished as the war in Vietnam dominated the news. President Johnson continued to downplay the event and even declined to present in person the Medal of Honor to Captain McGonagle, who had remained on the *Liberty's* bridge throughout the attack and, though badly wounded, conned his ship under extraordinary conditions to deeper water and a rendezvous with units of the Sixth Fleet the following day.

James Scott provides an interesting and detailed account of how President Johnson tried to control the politically sensitive award ceremony a year after the attack, and even after the President's announcement that he would not run for reelection:

James Cross, the president's senior military aide, delivered McGonagle's citation and a Presidential Unit Citation for the rest of the crew to the president for his signature on May 15, 1968. Cross urged Johnson not to present either award in person. The president signed both citations that afternoon, then followed Cross's advice.

Both awards were returned to the Department of Defense for presentation, and no press release regarding them was issued by the White House.

The president instead visited former president Dwight Eisenhower at the Walter Reed Army Hospital the morning of McGonagle's ceremony. . . . The president returned to the White

House afterward, less than four miles from the Washington Navy Yard, where he presided over the graduation ceremony of the Capitol Page School in the East Room. Too concerned about domestic politics to present the nation's highest award for heroism, the commander in chief instead handed out diplomas to high school students.

Thus, at 11:30 on the morning of June 11, 1968, Adm. Thomas Moorer, then chief of naval operations, and Secretary of the Navy Paul Ignatius conducted the ceremony in the sail loft of the Washington Navy Yard and presented the Medal of Honor to Captain McGonagle. Moorer described the President's refusal to present the award to McGonagle as a "back-handed slap." He added that "the way they did things I'm surprised they didn't just hand it to him under the 14th Street Bridge."

Far more egregious was Johnson's meddling in the Navy's court of inquiry report, which sparked outrage among military leaders in the Pentagon and a handful of congressmen who rallied for action and were slammed by the media, including the *Washington Post*. Scott notes that Chief of Naval Operations Adm. David McDonald seethed when, on June 28, 1967, he read the findings prepared for the public by Cyrus Vance, the top aide to Secretary of Defense McNamara. The report left McDonald "with the feeling that we're trying our best to excuse the attackers . . . I myself do not subscribe to it."

The author's father, John Scott, served aboard the *Liberty* as the damage-control officer and was awarded the Silver Star for his role in keeping his ship afloat and leading the fire-fighting teams during the attack. The book is dedicated to John Scott and his shipmates: "For my father, John Scott, who lived to tell about it. And in memory of the thirty-four, who didn't."

Thomas Schaaf, Sr., writes from Fairfax, Virginia.

A Transformational President

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House

by Jon Meacham
New York: Random House;
512 pp., \$35.00



Jon Meacham, editor of *Newsweek*, portrays Andrew Jackson as one of America's transformational presidents, including him in the company of Lincoln and the two Roosevelts. He highlights the crucial events that took place during the 17th president's two terms in office (1829-37), maintaining that three of those incidents effectively define him. The first (and foremost) was Jackson's repudiation of an attempt by South Carolina to nullify the federal tariff, which the state's leaders believed to be detrimental to the South.

Jackson saw the move as an attack on the Union. His Unionist commitment was summed up in a retort to John C. Calhoun's toast at the Democratic Jefferson Day Banquet in 1830. Calhoun offered the sentiment, "The Union, next to our liberties, the most dear." Jackson raised his glass to the words, "Our Federal Union; it must be preserved."

The second incident was Jackson's veto of a bill that renewed the charter for the Second Bank of the United States. This was the first time a president used the veto for political purposes, rather than because he deemed a bill unconstitutional. The third key event was his signing of the Indian Removal Act (1830), by which Jackson brutally forced the removal of the southern Indian tribes west of the Mississippi.

Andrew Jackson was a lone surviving orphan; he had no children; and his wife, Rachel, had died shortly before he assumed office. From those facts the author infers a psychological need for familial support. He shows how Jackson created a "family" from

his circle of shirttail relatives, viewing himself as *paterfamilias*.

However, Meacham fails to mine the limitations in Jackson's broad understanding of his extended national family, particularly when it came to Indians and slaves. Jackson's sentiments toward those two groups were inconsistent with those of his six predecessors, all of whom gave at least lip service to fair dealings with the Native Americans and personally expressed discomfort with the institution of slavery. This failure may reflect some reluctance on Meacham's part to cast his subject in an unflattering light.

Jackson's ersatz clan comprised Major Andrew Jackson Donelson (a nephew of Jackson's late wife); Donelson's wife, Emily; Andrew Jackson, Jr. (another nephew of Rachel), whom he legally adopted; and Andrew Jr.'s wife, Sarah, along with the children of both couples. Jackson demanded intense loyalty, which he returned in kind. An example of his fealty to those close to him was his stubborn support for his longtime friend, Secretary of War John Eaton, despite the questionable character of Eaton's wife, Margaret, which caused Jackson considerable trouble with the Donelsons, as well as with the Washington social set.

Expansion of the franchise during the 1820's encouraged a new popularization of the presidency. Jackson was elected because he received widespread support from the uneducated and nonpropertied masses. This emboldened him to govern by appealing directly to the people. Alexis de

Tocqueville, who was visiting the United States during Jackson's tenure as president, presciently observed that the result of this democratic broadening was mediocrity in public life, removing the country far from the aristocracy of virtue envisioned by the Founding Fathers:

General Jackson, whom the Americans have twice elected to the head of their Government, is a man of violent temper and mediocre talents; no one circumstance in the whole course of his career ever proved that he is qualified to govern a free people, and indeed the majority of the enlightened classes of the Union has always been opposed to him. But he was raised to the Presidency, and had been maintained in the lofty station, solely by the recollection of a victory which he gained twenty years ago under the walls of New Orleans, a victory which was, however, a very ordinary achievement.

Tocqueville's assessment of Jackson is consistent with the sociological facts of the day, yet it is completely ignored by Meacham. The strength of Jackson's populist appeal enabled him to blur the constitutionally established separation of powers, and it encouraged Congress to shirk its responsibilities in the face of executive aggression.

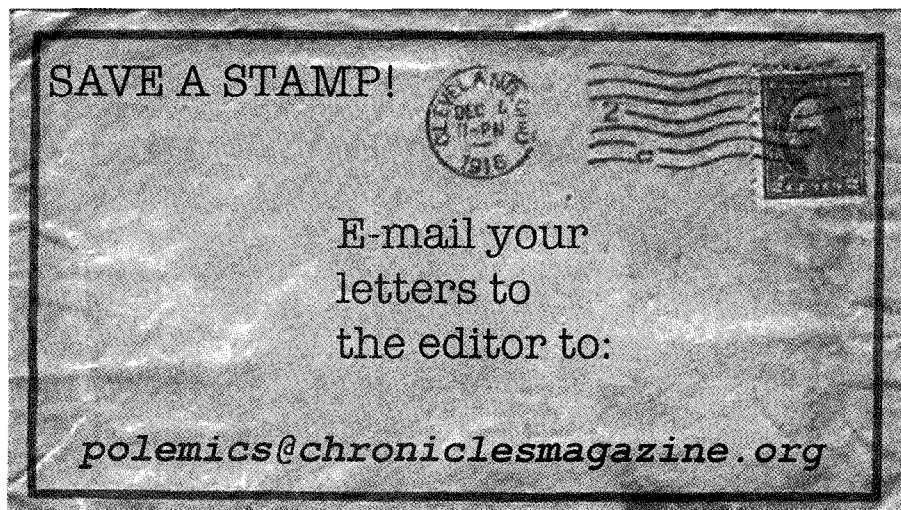
In many ways Jackson was an elitist.

Writes Tocqueville, "General Jackson appears to me, if I may use the American expressions, to be a Federalist by taste, and a Republican by calculation." This insight is vitally important to understanding Jackson. But it is a point Meacham misses, and the book suffers because of it. For example, Jackson showed complete disregard for the law when he imposed martial law in New Orleans during the War of 1812. He carried this high-handedness into the White House when he illegally took federal deposits out of the Second Bank of the United States and put them in state banks. This was accomplished over the objections of his own Treasury secretary, and it caused Jackson to be censured by the Senate.

Jackson's hatred of the Bank was both ideological and political—a form of revenge on the banking interests that had opposed his election. It was also a matter of pandering to the masses with promises of a more equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, which he claimed was controlled by an unpopular minority (bankers or Wall Street executives). This is the stuff of demagoguery—the kind of thing leaders such as Jackson resort to effectively. They apply personal charisma to forge a program and package it as a popular call for change. Upon closer examination, however, the change they urge is often self-serving. Jackson and other "transformational" presidents have used their popularity to ride roughshod over the Constitution, to subdue the Congress, and to remake America according to their own lights.

Meacham might have written *American Lion* as an apologia for the current president. The similarities between Jackson and Obama—their charisma, populism, focus on redistribution of wealth, and promise of change—are uncannily striking. Meacham's encomiastic treatment, minus any analyses of Jackson's dark side and criticism for his programs, may limit the value of this book.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is chaplain and research fellow at Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Once There Was a War

"Sut mae? Sut rydych chi?"

I'm going to assume that most readers did not understand those phrases, which translate roughly to "How are you? How are things going?" And that lack of comprehension is a critical historical fact, because, if a generation of British historians and archaeologists is correct, then you should have no problem in following that conversation. The words are in Welsh, which is the lineal descendant of the Celtic languages that ordinary people spoke in Britain for many centuries before about A.D. 400. Yet somehow, between 400 and 600, that older language more or less disappeared in the most prosperous parts of that island, which became England. It was English, not British or Welsh, that spread around the world.

How did the linguistic change happen? Up till 60 years ago, the answer was simple. At the end of the Roman Empire, Britain was raided by Germanic peoples, variously known as Angles, Saxons, Frisians, and Jutes. Hoping to buy them off, British rulers took some of those barbarians into their service, but around 440, the mercenaries rebelled and launched a horrendous massacre described by the British writer Gildas. Native British peoples were annihilated or ethnically cleansed, or else survived as slaves and tributary peoples on the distant margins of society. By the seventh century Germanic peoples had spread their rule over what became the land of the Angles, England.

In recent decades, that once-familiar narrative has become almost laughably unfashionable. At every stage, the story offends the sensibilities of liberal or leftist scholars, who are appalled at the idea of war and invasion being responsible for mighty social changes. And speaking of civilization or Dark Ages implied that we could somehow evaluate or judge different societies, placing some higher or lower in the

scale. Do these concepts not justify racism, imperialism, and militarism? The image of high civilization under barbarian assault had alarming implications for modern debates over immigration and multiculturalism.

From the 1960's, then, archeologists stressed instead the continuities uniting the older Britain with the new England. They underplayed the "civilized" nature of the fading society, stressing that Roman culture remained only a veneer overlaying a largely peasant native society. Anglo-Saxon peoples then arrived in Britain as invited guests, whose tastes and styles gradually spread through the whole community. As the cities and villas crumbled, so the two races merged quite peacefully. By the time Anglo-Saxon England emerges in the historical record in the eighth century, it has thoroughly united its Celtic and Germanic roots in a triumph of multicultural integration.

But what do we do with that thorny linguistic issue? Because in England at least—as opposed to Wales and Scotland—the Celtic languages simply did not survive, with the trivial exception of a couple of dialect words (*crag* for *rock*, *brock* for *badger*). This was a process utterly different from what happened on the Continent, where the descendants of the Germanic peoples all adopted the Latin languages, which evolved into French, Spanish, and the other Romance tongues. The British language, however, enjoyed no such afterlife, and a common-sense approach surely suggests that its speakers themselves vanished.

Not a bit of it, proclaim recent historians. Languages, in this view, are fashion items, like styles in hair and jewelry, and are adopted through a comparable process of diffusion. As Anglo-Saxon styles became popular, the British took up the new language as the fashionable thing to do. Presumably bands of star-struck Celts fol-



lowed a Saxon chief, calling, "Prithee, my Lord! Canst thou help us with our strong verbs?"

Those arguments could have gone on indefinitely, except that incontestable new evidence tells us exactly what did happen at the end of Roman Britain. The new data come from genetics, and particularly from recent studies coordinated by Harvard medievalist Michael McCormick. If we trace the Y chromosomes passed down through males, we find overwhelmingly strong genetic links between the male inheritance of the English and that of Frisia, the reported home of many of the invaders. In contrast, genetic ties between the Germanic English and the Celtic Welsh are very slim indeed. We can now say confidently that when the Germanic peoples entered Britain, they interbred enthusiastically with native women, but that native male lines effectively vanished. Possibly the invaders systematically killed all males they encountered, or else surviving Celtic men were so enslaved and humiliated that they had little chance of passing on their genes. But in either scenario, a million Romano-British men alive in 400 vanished without genetic trace. Gildas, in other words, was portraying sober, gruesome, fact.

Historians invent comfortable fictions to justify their political ideologies, but eventually the myths fracture, leaving us to confront unpleasant facts about the fate of civilized societies that fail to defend themselves. Sometimes the barbarians are real, and they do act like barbarians.



A Cautionary Tale

When pro-life activist James Pouillon was murdered in Owosso, Michigan, on September 11, I read a few dozen accounts from both national and Michigan news sources and quickly decided I had a handle on the story. Harlan Drake, the man who has admitted to murdering Pouillon, seems deeply disturbed, and he had murdered another man and pursued a third. While neither of Drake's other targets was publicly involved in pro-life activities, the Shiawassee County Sheriff's Department and the prosecutor's office both confirmed that Drake had told authorities that he had targeted Pouillon for his "pro-life stance."

In a short piece for the *About.com* Catholicism GuideSite, I talked less about Pouillon, Drake, or the murder, and more about the disparity in reactions between pro-life and pro-abortion groups to the murders of Pouillon and late-term abortionist George Tiller. While pro-life groups had been quick to condemn Tiller's murder, with few or no equivocations, pro-abortion groups were much slower to issue statements about Pouillon's murder, and when NARAL did, the statement had a "you got one of ours; we got one of yours; let's call it even" feel.

After publishing the piece, I noticed that a number of articles about Pouillon's murder had quotes from residents of Owosso referring to him as "the sign guy." I did some digging and found that, for about a decade, Pouillon had used graphic posters of aborted children in his protests, many of which (as on the day he was murdered) took place across the street from Owosso High School. The use of such posters is controversial even among pro-lifers, and I have written before about why I oppose them. Still, while their use may have contributed to Drake's rage, it neither justifies murder nor mitigates Drake's responsibility.

By the end of the day, however, I was contacted by a resident of Owosso who

knew Pouillon and his activities, and who explained that the story was much more complex. In their (our?) rush to score political points, pro-life groups had begun referring to Pouillon as a "peaceful" man and a "martyr" to the cause of life. The inevitable comparisons with Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., followed.

Yet pro-life activists in Owosso had a different story to tell, and my contact directed me to the website of the *Argus-Press*, where residents of Owosso were discussing their experiences with Pouillon. Even local admirers admitted that he seemed to thrive on confrontation and had told several of them that he expected—indeed, hoped—to be killed one day while protesting.

All of this had been ignored by outside news agencies. Even the *Argus-Press*, while it should be commended for providing a forum in which a fuller picture emerged, shied away from discussing the details in its news stories. That is why so many of us thought that we knew everything, when in fact we knew only the barest details.

In a follow-up story published in the September 24 issue of *The Wanderer* and reprinted on the *About.com* Catholicism GuideSite, I explored the implications of Pouillon's activities and his murder in greater depth, and questioned whether such confrontational tactics are either appropriate or useful. What did Pouillon's death actually accomplish, other than to tear apart the community of Owosso? By the time the piece appeared, however, the damage had been done, and readers responded to the attempt to paint a fuller picture of James Pouillon's activities and murder by repeating the myth.

Over the past nine years of writing *The Rockford Files*, and several more years before that covering the Rockford school-desegregation case and eminent-domain land grabs by local government, I have seen many situations where the reporting of outside news



agencies simply did not reflect the reality of events here in Rockford. The Rockford desegregation case, for instance, was about the closing of a neighborhood high school before a greedy Chicago lawyer, brought in by the mostly white plaintiffs, turned it into a racial class-action suit. (Many of the original plaintiffs spent years fighting the very lawyer they had hired.) The *Chicago Tribune*, the *Rockford Register-Star*, and the weekly *Rock River Times* all printed glowing profiles of the local Muslim school before two editors from a small monthly magazine actually spent an entire day at the school, interviewed students, teachers, and administrators, and came away with a very different story of a library stocked with radical Islamic books and videotapes, young children singing rap songs glorifying *jihad*, and a school-board chairman who touted the virtues of *sharia* and Osama bin Laden.

In other words, I should have known better. Life at the local level is always much more complex than what even a good, unbiased, hard-working reporter can capture in a few hundred words for a wire story or a 90-second segment on the six o'clock news. And a reporter from outside a community will always have trouble placing an event such as Pouillon's murder in the context of that community's history. That is why local news is more important than ever, even as the internet threatens to put the last truly local newspapers and radio and TV stations out of business.

And that, too, is why readers need to take everything they read with a grain of salt—even when it comes from someone they trust. 

Letter From Quebec

by Jean Morse-Chevrier

Quebec's New State Religion



In June 2005, the National Assembly of Quebec adopted Bill 95, which changed the nature of religious and moral teaching in all schools across Quebec. Before 2008, parents could choose between Catholic, Protestant, and nonreligious options. Now all students in both public and private schools are required by law to take a course on religious culture and ethics. Even homeschoolers must receive the "equivalent" of this program, which has been applied in classrooms since September 2008 and covers all the years of primary and secondary school.

Although the Education Act provides that school boards may exempt children from certain courses for humanitarian reasons or to prevent serious harm to a child, the Ministry of Education has made it clear that it will tolerate no exceptions to this course. Thousands of parents from many different public schools have been refused the right to withdraw their children. This led the family of Daniel Jutras and Suzanne Lavallée, supported by the Coalition for Freedom in Education, to take their case to the Superior Court of Quebec in Drummondville.

On August 31, Judge Jean-Guy Dubois ruled in favor of the school board and the Ministry of Education and against the right of parents to have their child exempted from the course. He was strongly influenced by expert witness Gilles Routhier, a priest and theologian of Quebec City, who quoted Pope John Paul II (in *Catechesi tradendae*) as saying that knowledge of other religions can contribute to better understanding between faiths. Routhier also cited the conclusions of the first Catholic-Muslim

Seminar held in Rome in November 2008, which stated that it is essential that young people be well formed in their own religion and well informed about other religions and cultures.

Both the Coalition for Freedom in Education and the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec (APCQ) were shocked that a civil court would take upon itself the task of interpreting the position of the Catholic Church with regard to the teaching of young students. As APCQ pointed out, nothing in the Vatican documents can be interpreted to apply to young children. Traditionally in Quebec, teaching about other faiths had been reserved for students in their final two years of high school, an arrangement that parents had accepted.

Richard Décarie of the Coalition for Freedom in Education said,

The courts are qualified to rule on the sincerity of the religious or philosophical belief of the plaintiff. But the State is not in a position to referee between interpretations of religious faiths, nor should it do so in the future.

The Catholic parents, in response to the ruling, quoted passages from Pope John Paul II which show his concern that parents be respected as the prime educators and that public schools offer the choice of Catholic religious education.

One private Catholic high school, Loyola College in Montreal, also stood up to the Ministry of Education. Most of its parents requested that their children be exempted from the program, so the school proposed to the ministry that it be allowed to continue giving its own moral and religious course, which includes elements of ethics and other religious cultures, as an alternative. The ministry refused, and the school took its case to the Superior Court of Quebec in Montreal. A ruling is expected by December.

In Drummondville, experts who gave testimony in favor of the par-

ents included Louis O'Neill and Guy Durand, Catholic theologians; Gary Caldwell, a Protestant sociologist; and David Mascré, a French Catholic philosopher. In Montreal, Douglas Farrow, a professor of religious studies, and Gérard Lévesque, a Catholic philosopher, gave testimony in support of the parents.

The attorney general of Quebec represented the ministry against Loyola and intervened in the Drummondville case, calling as expert witnesses, in both places, Georges Leroux, a secular-humanist philosopher, and Jacques Pettigrew, a bureaucrat from the ministry. Gilles Routhier witnessed only against the parents in Drummondville.

On May 5, Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, prefect of Catholic education at the Vatican, sent a letter to the Catholic bishops in Quebec reminding them of the right of parents, defined by Catholic social teaching, to direct the moral and religious education of their children. He also warned against the dangers of courses on moral and religious culture. If classroom instruction in religion merely sets before the students different faiths in a comparative or neutral manner, the result may be confusion, relativism, or indifference. Judge Dubois did not allow the letter to be introduced as evidence in Drummondville, because it became public after the opening of the court proceedings on May 12.

The Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops has maintained its stance, made clear in March 2008, that the course should continue to be taught until sufficient time has passed for its effects to become clear. It has not given its support to Cardinal Grocholewski's position, to the parents requesting exemption, or to Loyola College's request to be dispensed from the program. Only Marc Cardinal Ouellet, archbishop of Quebec City and Catholic primate of Canada, has spoken publicly in favor of the parents' position.

Why do the Association of Catho-

lic Parents of Quebec and the Coalition for Freedom in Education object to this program?

The course trivializes religion by placing all religions, spiritual teachings, religious movements, and views of life on equal footing. In giving an account of the origin of the Earth, for example, the story of Creation in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the Yin and the Yang, and the story of the primordial frog are all treated as if they were of equal value.

The course misrepresents religion by leaving out the dimension of transcendence. Among the “names of the divine,” there is no mention of Jesus Christ Who is, in the Christian teaching, God incarnate.

The course does not provide a full overview of each religion, only a part of each across a spectrum of themes. For example, the course teaches the celebration of Christmas, Sukkoth (the Jewish feast of tabernacles), Wesak (the Buddhist feast of the full moon), Diwali (the Hindu feast of lights), and Mothers’ Day. It also introduces children to the Koran, the Vedas, the Tripitaka, and the Bible, as well as various methods of prayer and meditation.

The course violates the privacy of each child and his family, because he is required to share with others the religious beliefs and practices of his family or religious community. And it interferes with parental authority, for the child is expected to question the beliefs and convictions he has been taught at home or at church. He is expected to justify his decision whether or not to modify his convictions after having encountered those of others.

In the course, a child does not learn what is right and wrong, but that different individuals have different ways of viewing moral questions. Thus, at the beginning of adolescence, children are being required to develop independence in deciding moral questions before their thought processes are fully developed and before they have sufficient experience to make mature judgments about the impact of ethical decisions. Of course, tolerance is valued more than any other virtue—tolerance not simply of other

people but of all points of view. Such tolerance contradicts the core beliefs of many religions.

The course identifies the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms as the main point of reference to develop common public values—and such values are frequently less demanding on the moral plane than religious values. This deprives the child of a strong moral standard to sustain him throughout life.

In short, this state-imposed and judicially enforced curriculum seeks to convert the children of Quebec to a new religion. Is it any wonder, then, that so many conservative Christians are voicing strong opposition?

Dr. Jean Morse-Chevrier is president of the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec.

Letter From Scotland

by Christie Davies

Scottish Weakness and Muslim Impudence



The decision to release the Libyan terrorist Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi from a Scottish prison has caused much anger in the United States. (Megrahi was convicted for his part in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, on December 21, 1988, which killed a total of 270 people.) Indeed, many Americans believe that his release “on compassionate grounds” was authorized by the British government. American anger was intensified by the fact that Megrahi was given a hero’s welcome by an Arab mob on his return home to Libya and by the suspicion that Britain had engineered his release out of self-interest.

Britain does indeed want something from Libya, and it isn’t just oil; she wants a cessation of illegal immigration from Africa to Italy and Malta, each of which serves as a launching pad to Britain. The Libyans are hint-

ing that they will pay compensation to the victims of IRA terrorists in Britain and Ulster killed by weapons they supplied. It is still much resented in Ulster that among those who helped to fund the decades of IRA terror were citizens of Massachusetts and New York who gave money to front organizations whom they knew full well were not really the charities they pretended to be. Thus, sadly, on September 11, 2001, many in Belfast were saying, “Serves them right; now they know what it feels like to be attacked by terrorists.” It was also observed in Ulster that 3,000 of their people had lost their lives to terrorism out of a population of 1.5 million, which is a far greater percentage than those who lost their lives on September 11 in New York. Qaddafi’s offer may be an attempt to rekindle that British sense of resentment at America’s failure to do anything effective at either the state or the federal level to cut off funds going to the IRA.

However, the decision to free Megrahi, who is suffering from terminal prostate cancer, was not made in Belfast, nor even in London, but in Edinburgh by Scotland’s Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill on behalf of the Scottish government. That government is run by the Scottish Nationalist Party, which is deeply committed to Scotland’s full independence from Britain. The decision lay with MacAskill because Megrahi had been convicted under Scots law. Scots law and the Scottish legal system have always been entirely separate (and different) from the English Common Law and courts. In addition, Scotland now has her own parliament, elections, and executive.

Only after Megrahi had set off for Libya did the Scottish government ask the Scottish parliament to endorse the decision to release him as being “consistent with the principles of Scottish justice.” However, the Scottish Nationalists have only 47 seats in the 129-member parliament, and the government lost the vote. An amendment condemning the justice secretary and his decision, proposed by the opposition Conservative, Liberal Democrat,

and Labour parties, passed 73 to 50. Given that so many had been killed in little Lockerbie itself, as debris fell from the smoldering aircraft, it is surprising that the censure didn't receive more votes. The Scottish Nationalist government is now thoroughly discredited, and a former Scottish first minister "yell'd out like syllable of do-lour" that "the reputation of the Scottish legal system has been tarnished for years to come." Scotland's leading Conservative, David McLetchie, commented that they "could have had a judgment of Solomon. Instead we got a judgment of MacAskill. That judgment is a miscarriage of justice which shames Scotland."

"Alas, poor country! Almost afraid to know itself."

But why did "puir wee MacAskill" come to such a wrong and foolish decision? It has been suggested that it was part of a deal to encourage Arab investment in Scotland after a meeting in Qatar. In light of the fact that Scotland is hopelessly in debt following the collapse of her major banks and can now never become fully independent, that suggestion is plausible, but MacAskill is far too honest and far too stupid to make such a deal. He genuinely believes he did the right thing, showing mercy where it was required. But why was mercy extended in this case when in others it might not have been? The answer lies not with any particular institution or individual but in the culture of political correctness that has Scotland in its grasp. Megrahi is African, Arab, and Muslim, and so qualifies for special treatment. This mentality may well have influenced MacAskill's advisors.

Muslims in Scotland are treated with extreme deference, with results that sometimes (as in the Megrahi case) offend our sense of justice but more often, in trivial contexts, merely provide an affront to common sense. In Scotland tragedy alternates with farce as these wretched people are appeased, however much this angers the ordinary decent Scot.

The most absurd recent example occurred in 2008 when the Dundee Muslims forced the Tayside police to

withdraw a postcard with a puppy on it and publicly apologize for offending them by making such use of a hated, polluted, *najis* (impure) beast. The police had issued a postcard depicting a police-dog puppy sitting on a distinctively Scottish policewoman's hat next to a telephone with the message "Tayside Police has a new number for non-emergency calls." The card was sent to local shopkeepers to display. Everyone in Scotland, as in America, loves man's best friend. But a Muslim shopkeeper, not content to refuse to display the card (which was well within his rights), complained to a Muslim member of the local council, who was also a member of the police board. Soon, Muslims were crying that they had been insulted and that no dog should ever have been put on an official Scottish postcard. It had, of course, not occurred to the honest Scots officers that Muslims hold to the primitive and un-Scottish view that to display a photograph of a dog is a moral outrage. Muslims argue that the angels of Allah hate all pictures and dogs. A picture of a dog is thus doubly defiling.

Scotland, unlike any Muslim state, is a proudly free country. If the Muslims wish to believe this piffle, which is utterly repugnant to our Western sensibilities, then they are welcome to do so. Any Scot who learns that Muslims hate dogs will think that they are crazy and possessed of a mentality alien to his own, but no Muslim is ever going to be forced to hug a Scottie, stroke a Cairn terrier, or come into contact with any of the many charming and lovable breeds of dog for which Scotland is famous. No one would have ever considered forcing the whingeing Muslim to put up the postcard of the dog in his shop. All he had to do was say, "No, thank you"—or say nothing at all and simply throw it in the garbage. He could even have asked a Presbyterian or Catholic or Jewish neighbor to cut out the bit with the dog on it and just leave the phone and phone number. If he would have liked a postcard with a different design on it for his own use, he could have done what a Dundee Hindu or Jew or Sikh

or Parsee with qualms about images would have done and quietly spoken to someone in the police poster department.

But that is not the Muslim way. They have to organize, assert that they are superior, show their power, and force the indigenous majority to abase themselves by the sly use of every trick of political correctness. The Scottish police duly apologized for offending Muslims and for "not seeking advice from the force's diversity adviser" before publishing and distributing the postcards. Political correctness is Muslim power, and they know it and exploit it at the expense of the wishes, preferences, and self-respect of the people in whose country they have settled.

Their hatred of all things canine has its practical side, too. Both in England and in Scotland, police dogs, including sniffer dogs, now have to be fitted with booties before searching any Muslim home or building. This ruling will prove very helpful to Britain's numerous Muslim drug dealers who import drugs *via* their native Pakistan. You can imagine an officer in hot pursuit saying, "Now, Rover, Police Dog 83, I know you can smell something and are straining at the leash to go in, but we have to stop to put your cumbersome booties on first." Meanwhile, guess who has escaped by the back door, taking the stuff with him? It is just a matter of time before dogs are forbidden to sniff Muslims at airports when they are bringing gifts to Lockerbie.

Perhaps Kenny MacAskill's otherwise inexplicable idiocy over the Megrahi case is now a little easier to understand.

Christie Davies, who has extensively lectured in and written about Scotland and India, is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain.



by Justin Raimondo

The Sibel Edmonds Story

Sibel Edmonds is a former translator for the FBI—and she's a tease. And I don't just mean the seductive allure of her dark good looks. For years, she's been hinting at the vastness of the story she's been sitting on, letting it out in dribs and drabs, like Chinese water torture. But now, at last, she's come out with it—and she's naming names.

Five days after September 11, Edmonds was hired by the FBI to translate Turkish and Farsi intercepts—recordings of chatter between alleged Turkish agents and their American collaborators. There was just one problem: One of her coworkers turned out to be a member of the very organization whose office was being bugged by the feds. This organization, according to Edmonds, was a veritable conduit of corruption, paying out bribes to government officials (including a highly placed State Department official) and members of Congress in exchange for access to top-secret information, illicit weapons sales, and—horrifically, in this age of terrorism—nuclear technology. This coworker and her husband, a U.S. military officer, attempted to recruit Edmonds into their cabal; Edmonds refused and went straight to her supervisors. Instead of investigating these serious charges, they responded by getting rid of her.

She appealed her termination and gained some congressional allies: Senators Charles Grassley and Patrick Leahy have backed her up, and a Department of Justice inspector general reported that her allegations are not only “serious” but “credible” and “warrant a thorough and careful review by the FBI.” That review was not forthcoming. Instead, then-attorney general John Ashcroft stepped in, and declared the whole matter was a “state secret.” Edmonds was slapped with a gag order. That, however, didn't stop her from talking, albeit rather more obliquely. Now, however, she's told her story, or at least the outlines of it,

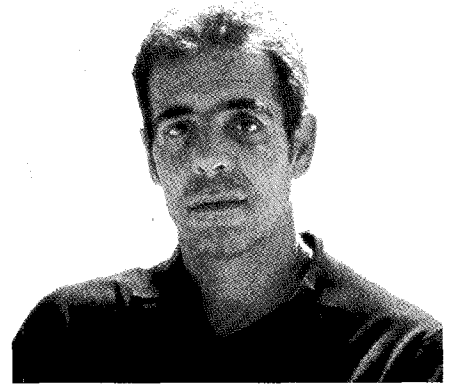
in an interview in *The American Conservative* with Philip Giraldi, a former CIA officer now with Cannistraro Associates.

Among her explosive statements is her allegation that a Turkish-Israeli joint intelligence operation exists, which has agents planted in every major nuclear facility in the United States and operates a black-market auction of nuclear secrets and technology. The bidders are not only government entities, such as the Turkish government and the Israelis, but private individuals: rich Saudi businessmen, the Turkish mafia, and other organizations that may be fronts for foreign intelligence operations.

These agents have penetrated the U.S. Congress through bribery and blackmail. Cash payments and the secret videotaping of an Illinois Democratic congresswoman engaged in a lesbian affair with one of their Turkish operatives was no doubt enough to convince Rep. Jan Schakowsky to go along with whatever plans they had for her.

This cabal was also responsible for outing the now-famous Brewster-Jenning outfit—a CIA front, headed up by then-CIA agent Valerie Plame, that was set up to investigate and put a stop to nuclear proliferation, i.e. precisely the sorts of activities that were (and presumably still are) the lifeblood of the cabal.

Marc Grossman, a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and later the third-highest-ranking State Department official, appeared on the FBI's radar early on, while he was still resident in Turkey, on account of his apparent connections with the Turkish mafia as well as Turkish and Israeli government operatives. He was recalled from Ankara when his participation in a scandal involving his mafia friends threatened to expose his activities to public view. Returning to Washington, Grossman was rewarded with the



position of director general of the Foreign Service and director of human resources. The top office responsible for hiring and firing in the State Department is an ideal position for a foreign agent to hold.

With the FBI on the other end, and Edmonds translating his conversations, Grossman handed out American secrets to his Turkish and Israeli clients and sold other tidbits to whatever foreign entities were interested. He also actively assisted the efforts of foreign agents to infiltrate U.S. government labs and other defense facilities, including Sandia and Los Alamos, by granting security clearances. The “seeds” were graduate students recruited by a professor at MIT, who provided lists of compliant candidates who met the technical qualifications. They were paid less than \$5,000 for information that would later be auctioned off to the Saudis, or some other interested party, for a hundred times that amount.

Grossman himself was the recipient of large sums of money for his role as the biggest spider in that particular web: Edmonds recalls the time Grossman sent a State Department employee to pick up \$14,000 in a brown paper bag—payment for services rendered.

Edmonds avers that “the top person obtaining classified information was Congressman Tom Lantos.” The late Democratic congressman from California, known as the most vociferously pro-Israel voice in Congress, allegedly worked through his aide, Alan Makovsky, whose other employer was the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Lantos is said to

have passed on “highly classified documents” to his AIPAC associates that somehow made their way to Israel.

All sorts of intelligence was handed out in this manner, including technical nuclear data, conventional-weapons research, and policy-related materials, and Lantos (Edmonds claims) was far from alone. Other alleged members of the congressional fifth column include Dennis Hastert (formerly the Republican speaker of the house, and now a registered lobbyist for the Turkish government), Bob Livingston, and Dan Burton.

Up to this point, the counterintelligence unit of the FBI had been mainly concerned with the corruption of Congress, but the widening net of contacts—whose conversations with the principals were translated and transcribed by Edmonds—led them to Grossman, Richard Perle, and Douglas Feith. That’s when the Department of Justice stepped in and tried to limit the scope of the probe to members of Congress. The FBI, however, pressed onward—and what they uncovered was a wriggling mass of treachery and treason, and on such a scale that it seems as if the entire U.S. government is rotten with it.

The Monica Lewinsky brouhaha put the investigation on the back burner, but the FBI kept track of the principals and, at one point, directly wiretapped the congressmen involved, as well as Grossman. When the Department of Justice found out about this, however, the whole thing was quashed—except in Chicago, where the G-men were conducting a separate investigation. Chicago, it appears, is living up to its reputation as the most corrupt city in the country: It was there that the cabal conducted much of its business.

If you were thinking that there had to be an Al Qaeda terrorism-related aspect to this, you’d be right. According to Edmonds, she translated intercepted conversations that indicated cooperation between “the mujahideen” and various Bin Ladens—plural, not singular—who “were going on private jets to Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. The Turkish ambassador in Azerbaijan worked with them.” These

activities—involving an operation in Central Asia—occurred

under our management. Marc Grossman was leading it, 100 percent, bringing people from East Turkestan into Kyrgyzstan, from Kyrgyzstan to Azerbaijan, from Azerbaijan some of them were being channeled to Chechnya, some of them were being channeled to Bosnia. From Turkey, they were putting all these bin Ladens on NATO planes. People and weapons went one way, drugs came back.

In short, Edmonds claims the cabal ran a drug operation stretching from the wilds of Central Asia to Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States:

A lot of the drugs were going to Belgium with NATO planes. After that, they went to the UK, and a lot came to the U.S. via military planes to distribution

centers in Chicago and Paterson, New Jersey. Turkish diplomats who would never be searched were coming with suitcases of heroin.

Here is a covert network in the United States vacuuming up nuclear-related intelligence and—who knows?—perhaps even fissile materials, allied in some sense with the perpetrators of the September 11 terrorist attacks. If Sibel Edmonds is telling the truth, it is hardly fantastic to suggest that this coalition of the corrupt could be facilitating the creation of a “dirty bomb” right here in our midst. If that doesn’t send a chill up and down your spine, then nothing will.

If Sibel Edmonds is lying, the victim of her own delusions, then why did the U.S. attorney general twice invoke the “state secrets” privilege and have her gagged? That she is speaking out now, at considerable risk to herself, represents perhaps the one last chance we have to save ourselves. 

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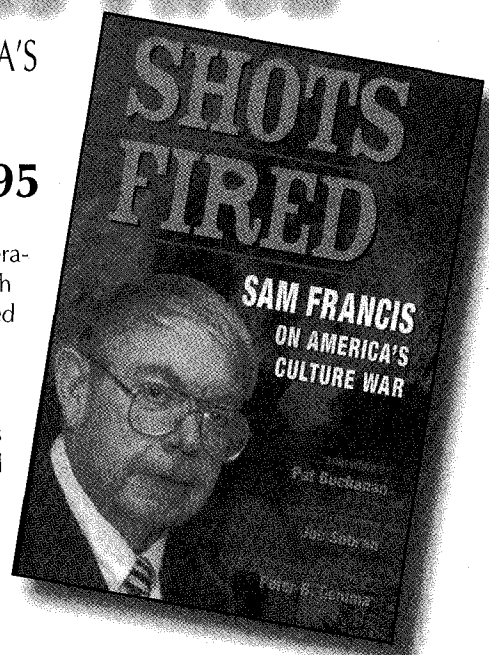
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Crazy Russian No More

A quarter of a century ago, when I started writing for this magazine, I was *the* Russian. Along with the sense of exclusivity it afforded, that simple tag gave its owner a clear run through the 1980's and 90's on both sides of the Atlantic. I was the only Russian in any crowd, whether as taciturn as the Scotch-drenched habitués of a club in St. James's or as boisterous as the desert sheiks losing their camels in a casino in Curzon Street. I had gone to Yale, retched with the best of them in the Rockingham, reviewed books for the *Wall Street Journal*, published English poems in *Encounter*, drunk *ombre* with descendants of Venetian doges, eaten macaroni with Sicilian gangsters, argued about communism with Taki, and eavesdropped on Russian hookers who had been working Chelsea long before the first New Russian businessman dipped his as-yet-unmanicured toe in the Thames.

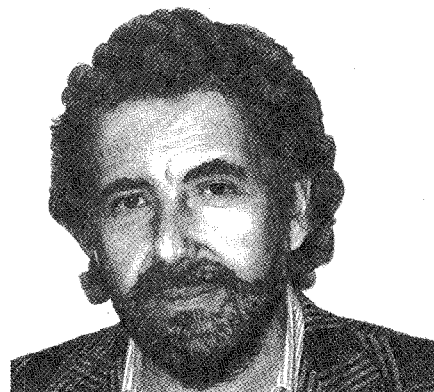
At least as far as social life went, in the new millennium my easy eminence began to totter. Chelsea had become a household Russian word. The fashion model Natalia Vodyanova had become a lady. Evgeny Lebedev had been launched as the Russian face of the British glossy *Tatler*, and reciprocated by launching Geordie Greig as the English face of the London *Evening Standard*, which his dad had bought from Lord Rothermere of the *Mail*. Through circumstances over which she had not had much control—such as acquaintance with Roman Abramovich—a fair maid by the name of Dasha Zhukova became a hotly discussed patroness of the arts. The Criterion restaurant in Piccadilly, where Dr. Watson first came across Sherlock Holmes, was in Russian hands. Olga Kurylenko was on every Englishman's salivating tongue.

A new hybrid was in evidence, and members of this mutant breed could condescend to the New Russians of old as much as I ever did. Miss Zhu-

kova's father, in whose company I often caroused when Aleksandr Zhukov was based in London in the late 1990's, was a classic example of the old species, making up with ursine gregariousness what he lacked in gentility and sophistication. To Western eyes, those old New Russians were uncouth. Their wives or mistresses might tell a Kelly from a Birkin, but the men spoke no European languages and only a mangled English, and when they mentioned Harrods you could have sworn they meant the bloke in Judea who had upset all the parents.

Now at last the new hybrid has been given an official appellation, courtesy of a monumental multimedia juggernaut financed by the richest of the *Forbes* rich in Russia, Mikhail Prokhorov, and managed by *Kommersant* creator Vladimir Yakovlev. At the heart of the multimillion-dollar venture is Snob, a club with an online presence for subscribers at www.snob.ru, whose current membership of 283 men and women expands at an average rate of one or two per month, and a thick literary review, somewhat along the lines of *Vanity Fair*, bearing the same name. By bringing together the most independent-minded and articulate representatives of what used to be called the Russian intelligentsia with the most cultivated and politically benign exponents of new Russian wealth, Snob wants to provide the new species, which it has christened "Global Russians," with both a natural habitat and a luxurious showcase.

Suffice it to say that every member of Snob is assigned one of some twenty staff amanuenses, Boswell-like bloggers who help to keep the club's site alive with his or her worldly doings. The *Evening Standard*'s Lebedev has joined, as has Vasily Sopromadze, owner of Holmes' watering hole in Piccadilly. A few months ago the photographer Gusov and I, both indecently hung over, met the London represen-



tative of Snob in an outdoor Belgravia café famous for the loucheness of its clientele.

"Timon of Athens," the young and handsome Global Russian introduced himself, and it was true. His name really was Timon Afinsky. Gusov and I felt like the Painter and the Poet in Shakespeare's play, desperately angling for advantage until shouted at in plain Russian that we had been asked to join the club. Some days later, a film crew descended on Gusov's bachelor pad in Gerald Road, once the studio of Sir Noel Coward, to record an obligatory interview for the Snob site with two stalwarts of the global diaspora, absent from Russia for a combined total of some 60 years and once again indecently hung over in the best tradition of whatever intelligentsia we eagerly represented.

Whatever social storms the future may hold in store for the nattering nabobs of positivism in the Kremlin, it is pretty clear that the few hundred travelers who, like myself before them, have in their youth detached themselves from the mother ship to seek wisdom and fulfillment in the outer space of London and Madrid, Bombay and Rio, can finally declare themselves a breed apart. They are not going anywhere, because they have been on the move from the moment the Soviet border became permeable, and in the event of a political emergency each of them can at least count on being known as eminently clubbable to newspaper editors from Adelaide to Zimbabwe.

Snob is their charter of self-determination. Like White émigrés in Paris in the 1920's, they are here to tell the West their story. 

THE MEDIA

On the Death of Newspapers

by Clay Reynolds

This past week, word came to me that a close friend and book-review editor of a major daily newspaper had been laid off after 16 years of service. The book page, one of the nation's best, would be reduced by half, and his "replacement" would be a youngster from the city desk, a competent young woman utterly inexperienced in book-review editing; her salary is considerably lower than my friend's was.

A day after hearing this, I learned that another editor I know would find out in a few weeks if he would survive the latest round of cuts. The irony is that he was one of the "youngsters" who replaced a venerated and higher-paid editor laid off about a year before. I can name more than a dozen veteran editors, feature writers, and reporters for major dailies who have been terminated in one way or another over the past two years.

It's not news that the nation's newspapers are on their way to extinction. Two substantial papers in Denver and Seattle have recently folded; rumor has it that three or four more are on the brink of closure; perhaps as many as a dozen will either go bankrupt or be forced to truncate themselves into unrecognizable entities before the end of the year.

Such a change is probably inevitable. An entire generation of Americans has grown up without developing so much as a casual relationship with a daily paper, relying instead on television and the internet to find out what's going on. They become defensive if anyone suggests that those sources don't measure up to the integrity or reliability of the traditional print media.

As immediate as TV and internet news coverage seems to be, the absorption and understanding of information reported and written by the "ink-stained wretches" in the narrow columns of a daily paper somehow have a deeper and more lasting impact. Newspapers offer a much richer and more thorough source of information than electronic media can provide.

When we read on a screen, we tend to scroll past material that seems overly complex or might require some lengthy contemplation. We may see a "hot link" that will take us to a headline, but we are not likely to go there just out of random curiosity. If we do, we may forget some other link of potential interest that we didn't use on the previous page. On the web, smaller items escape our notice, and we're not apt to happen across something we didn't know was there until we found it.

Of course, people often skim over a newspaper, too. But in a paper, something—a word, a phrase, a name—might catch the eye, cause a diversion, and lead a reader to learn something he didn't know he didn't know. No action—such as clicking a link—is required, and there's no ten-second wait for a page to load, then another while a pop-up ad forms itself and blocks the page. With a paper, one doesn't have to know about something to find it. It's right there.

Television, of course, reduces news stories to heavily edited ten- and twenty-second summaries. Viewers who want to know more are directed to visit the station's website. I suspect that few do. When I view a TV news report of interest, I usually make a note to check out the next day's newspaper to find out what really happened.

Recently, I put a stopwatch on a morning network news program. In the hour I surveyed, for every minute of actual news or even feature reporting, there were a full six minutes of commercial broadcast. At one juncture, nine minutes of commercials

separated actual news reports. Newspapers also rely on advertising for revenue. They devote full pages to ads, but if you're not shopping for furniture or clothing, or looking to sell gold or to buy a car, it's easy to turn past them in a second or two; you don't have to wait while the ads load, only to find out you're not interested in the product in the first place.

When this happens on nearly every click, it becomes annoying. It also discourages people from seeking out the news.

Since I was about 12, I've greeted the day with a perusal of the paper. (I used to end the day with an evening edition.) I don't read every article. Depending on the time of year or day of the week, I may skip lightly over the sports section or only glance at the entertainment section. Until recently, I almost never read the business section. But I always give a thorough read to the front section and the metro, state, national, and world pages. I read the editorials—including those I don't agree with. I also read the comics. (There's more wisdom there than one might think.) Every time I read a newspaper, I learn something I didn't know—and often something I didn't know I didn't know. I can't say that about the web or television.

When I'm on the road, I go out first thing and look for a newspaper kiosk. Failure to start my daily routine with the paper always results in a nagging feeling that I've neglected something. On mornings when we don't have to go to work, my wife and I might spend an hour or more reading the paper, talking across the table to each other about this article or that editorial or feature, maybe handing it over to share. We may discover some festival or concert we might want to attend, learn of the pending nuptials of an acquaintance's child, chuckle over our horoscopes. Somehow, our sitting at individual computer screens and shouting comments and hyperlinks from room to room isn't the same. Neither is trying to discuss some TV

report during commercials for erectile dysfunction and bowel regularity.

A newspaper offers timely suggestions about gardening and fashion, cooking and civic activities. There are book, movie, play, and concert reviews, celebrity gossip, tips on household chores and auto maintenance, and a crossword puzzle to work while waiting for an appointment. We might not know we wanted to work a crossword puzzle until we found one right in front of us, might not realize that our favorite movie star had broken up another marriage until we caught a feature article about it. These things can be found on the internet, of course. But they have to be sought out. They also require electricity or well-charged batteries.

Newspapers put the whole world right in front of us, and all that's required is daylight. They tell us who was born, who died, who will be missed, and who won't be forgotten. We can learn all of this from electronic media, but we have to hunt for it. In a newspaper, it's right there.

Demagogues and dictators fear nothing more than a free press. Able to be read anywhere by anyone, newspapers can be shared, clipped from, quoted. They have chronicled the best and the worst of human endeavor, preserved it. They have rallied patriots, calmed fears, assuaged worries, hooted victory, lamented disaster. A sensational headline is often worth keeping for posterity. How does one preserve a digital image, a television report? Who would want to? If you did, would you drag it out 50 years later and tell a wide-eyed grandchild, "I remember when this happened"?

There is something about reading words printed on paper, knowing that they have been written by someone who cares and vetted by someone who thinks, that give them a heft no blog, web page, or sound bite can match. Newspapers tell us who we are, where we have been, where we may be going. The World Wide Web mostly tells us that our virtual memory is inadequate, and a cellphone reminds us that our batteries are low.

Not long ago, a technophilic col-

league of mine declared that the print media are already dead. He may be right. I know that the days of cigar-chewing, fedora-wearing newshounds frantically pounding out a story to beat a deadline are as gone as newsboys shouting "EXTRA!" on street corners or anxious performers and politicians staying up all night to see what the morning editions may tell them about their fates. If present trends continue, newspapers may soon become similar quaint archaisms, as much a part of the past as the corner bookstore and roadside diner, places people commonly went to read the paper.

I do hope, though, that the daily paper will someday reemerge in all its glory. I don't think that a free and literate people will ever completely abandon the need to be able to stand or sit down almost anywhere and unfold a daily edition of all the news that's fit to print. My best hope is that the daily newspaper will find a way to survive and to reassert itself as the penultimate public forum of, for, and by the people who just want to know.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Father Abraham: Conservative?

by John M. Vella

The bicentenary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln has seen the publication of a host of new books and magazine articles celebrating the legacy of the 16th president. Lincoln's popularity is probably at its highest point thus far, and Honest Abe is defended by writers on both ends of the political spectrum. Liberals have been happy to offer praise of the first Republican administration, for empowering the federal govern-

ment at the expense of the states. In his recent biography of Lincoln, George McGovern declares that the war transformed a "union of states" into a "nation." He suggests that the widely shared Southern notion of a republic in which a government of limited powers defended the interests of property owners and a social order based on "family, kinship, and tradition" was replaced by the idea of "a strong centralized government that promoted industrial development, competition, and free-labor capitalism."

It has become increasingly difficult for Lincoln critics to get a hearing in mainstream conservative media. Conservative magazines such as *National Review* have made it political heresy to discuss the failures and shortcomings of the first Republican president. After all, such criticism could invite the charge of racism and thus undermine the latest GOP presidential candidate's ability to win the minority vote. Instead we find, for instance, in the February 23 issue of *National Review*, a cover story by Allen Guelzo praising Lincoln. Like the students of Leo Strauss who have appeared in those pages over the years, Guelzo denies that Lincoln had anything to do with the expansion of the federal government. He sees no connection between Lincoln's interpretation of the Declaration of Independence and the growth of federal power in later decades. There is an assumption shared by defenders of Lincoln that his interpretation of the Declaration's preamble, particularly his definition of equality, was the same as that of the Founding Fathers. Thomas L. Krannawitter defends this view in his new book, *Vindicating Lincoln*. In it, the views of West Coast Straussians—Harry Jaffa and his acolytes—are recycled to defend Lincoln against recent charges by libertarian critics.

Decades ago, distinguished conservatives such as M.E. Bradford and Willmoore Kendall debunked Lincoln's 1861 claim that "The Union is much older than the Constitution." Until recently, conservatives denied that the role of government was to

impose upon states the egalitarianism that Lincoln attached to the preamble of the Declaration or that these words of Jefferson had any constitutional force. Without referencing the arguments of either Bradford or Kendall, Krannawitter attempts to defend Lincoln's dogma without conducting a close examination of the Declaration itself. Like the Straussians before him, Krannawitter never bothers to read past the preamble to where the colonies declare their right

to be free and independent states . . . and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war . . . and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do.

Undaunted by the historical facts, Krannawitter doggedly defends the meaning Lincoln gave to the Declaration that "all men are created equal," by simply stating that the "timeless and universal idea of human equality is the central idea from which the precepts of American government and citizenship flow." Yet soon after the states wrote their own constitutions, they instituted strict voting qualifications that excluded most of the adult population. This fact alone calls into question their commitment to Lincoln's meaning of the Declaration. Indeed, there were many different meanings of equality in 1776. Men could be equally bound by moral duties or enjoy equality before the law, which did not apply to women or children at the time, let alone slaves. Krannawitter does not bother to ask himself how the representatives of slave states who signed the Declaration could have done so if they shared Lincoln's understanding. We are led to believe that they must have been hypocrites.

A less ideologically colored reading of early American history would offer a more accurate conclusion. Jefferson, Madison, and Mason may have disapproved of the peculiar institution in principle, but they were slow to free their slaves. Most slaveowners among the Founding Fathers, and

even some who owned no slaves, refused to fret over the institution because they did not think the words of the Declaration carried the meaning Lincoln would give them. To impose a meaning on an historical document that was not intended by its authors is to act precisely as liberal judges do when they interpret the Constitution. In this regard, Lincoln is not at all the conservative his Straussian apologists believe him to be.

During the heyday of American intellectual conservatism in the 1960's, William F. Buckley, Jr., permitted vigorous debate in the pages of *National Review*. In the August 24, 1965, issue, Frank S. Meyer challenged the uncritical hero worship of Abraham Lincoln, eliciting a rejoinder from Harry Jaffa. Jaffa objected to Meyer's claim that Lincoln violated the Constitution when he strengthened federal power at the expense of state sovereignty. By weakening the ability of states to resist federal tyranny, the delicate balance of power established by the Constitution was lost, resulting in the loss of political and economic liberty. Meyer claimed that "no political body in the constitutional structure could accrete to itself sovereign power." Jaffa responded that this view was the very deficiency of the Articles of Confederation that the Constitution was intended to remedy. In *Federalist* 45, however, Madison denied that the Constitution was transferring any more powers to the federal government; it simply "substitutes a more effectual mode of administering them." The wording of the Articles—that "each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence"—remained in force. Jaffa further argued in the September 21, 1965, issue that the loss of state sovereignty had more to do with the judicial "doctrine that the Federal Government has many more implied powers than those enumerated in the Constitution." He is "convinced" that this doctrine is in *The Federalist* but fails to offer any evidence. Madison, however, was very clear in *Federalist* 45 that the "powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few

and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite." Defined powers are not implied powers.

By defending a liberal doctrine of jurisprudence, which would necessarily transfer more power to the federal government, Jaffa could not object to the comparison Meyer made between Lincoln and latter-day architects of big-government liberalism:

Were it not for the wounds that Lincoln inflicted upon the Constitution, it would have been infinitely more difficult for Franklin Roosevelt to carry through his revolution, for the coercive welfare state to come into being and bring about the conditions against which we are fighting today.

Jaffa made no attempt to discredit this charge except to say that the "aggrandizement" of federal power was entirely constitutional. (Indeed, several years earlier, Jaffa made that argument in an essay entitled "The Case for a Stronger National Government.")

However, a more recent disciple of Strauss has taken up Meyer's challenge. In *The American Enterprise*, Dinesh D'Souza came to the defense of Lincoln against the charge of accelerating, if not inaugurating, the growth of federal power to the detriment of state sovereignty. The growth of federal power, he argued, was simply an expected—and presumably justified—result of war. D'Souza also acknowledged the suspension of *habeas corpus* and the arrest of Northerners who sympathized with the South. "But where is the evidence for neo-Confederate insistence that Lincoln can be blamed for the bloated welfare state?" History, once again, provides an answer. James M. McPherson, no "neo-Confederate" defender of the South, documented in *Battle Cry of Freedom* the detrimental impact of the Civil War on our liberties:

The old federal republic in which the national government had rarely touched the aver-

age citizen except through the post-office gave way to a more centralized polity that taxed the people directly and created an internal revenue bureau to collect these taxes, drafted men in the army, expanded the jurisdiction of federal courts, created a national currency and a national banking system, and established the first national agency for social welfare—the Freedmen’s Bureau. Eleven of the first twelve amendments to the Constitution had limited the powers of the national government; six of the next seven, beginning with the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, vastly expanded those powers at the expense of the states.

The Republican Party was the product of 19th-century nationalism. It favored Northern commercial interests and sought to expand the reach of federal power both domestically and internationally. In 1853, William Henry Seward, who would become Lincoln’s secretary of state, spoke of the need to “exercise a paramount influence in the affairs of the nations situated in this hemisphere.” His national-greatness policy constitutes what, “in the language of many, is called ‘progress’ and the position itself is what, by the same class, is called ‘manifest destiny.’” Applying the Monroe Doctrine to Cuba and Canada was insufficient. “You are already,” he told his audience, “the great continental power of America. But does that content you? I trust it does not. You want the commerce of the world, which is the empire of the world.” In his Lincoln biography, George McGovern reminds his readers of the 1864 Republican Party platform, which called for the “vigorous implementation of the Monroe Doctrine.” The grand nationalist ambitions of the Republican Party leaders could not be fulfilled without a strong central government. Gone forever was the memory of Washington’s plea for a humble republic that would avoid foreign entanglements. Republican plans were greatly, though temporar-

ily, frustrated by the departure of the Southern states from the Union.

Some neoconservatives find inspiration in the political rhetoric of early Republican Party leaders. Recall, for instance, the complaint of William Kristol and David Brooks in the *Wall Street Journal* that “today’s conservatism” does not “appeal to American greatness.” Yet we know from experience that “national greatness” thinking usually results in the centralization of power and the loss of individual liberty. And this goes hand in hand with the “big-government conservatism” that is so often defended when Republicans are in power. When asked by E.J. Dionne whether he and Brooks thought the New Deal was a mistake, Kristol replied, “Are we willing to say that the country is worse off because of FDR or JFK or LBJ? I’m not willing to say that.” At least in the minds of some neoconservatives, Lincoln’s principles do not conflict with New Deal liberalism. “Our nationalism is that of an exceptional nation founded on a universal principle,” wrote Kristol and Brooks, “on what Lincoln called ‘an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times.’” Kristol and Brooks represent the views of many in the Republican Party establishment. For instance, Republican presidential speechwriter Michael Gerson wants us to believe that our founding documents—as interpreted by Lincoln—require our military to “fight for the liberty of strangers.”

Ultimately, the blame for this tendency to view Father Abraham as the initiator of the imperial presidency must be placed at Lincoln’s feet. As Edward S. Corwin argued in his 1941 essay “The Aggrandizement of Presidential Power,” Lincoln established two precedents. The president could respond to matters that he thought presented actual or potential violence and may endanger the nation’s interests without undue concern for congressional or state objections. Thus, later presidents could use “Lincoln’s acts as if they supposed the thesis of presidential autonomy—in other words, presidential autocracy—in other fields of presidential power.” Lin-

coln exercised presidential power in ways the Supreme Court found illegal, yet the unconstitutionality of his policies has yet to tarnish his reputation among his “conservative” devotees. To preserve the Union, Lincoln pursued an undeniably laudable end using immoral means that destroyed the Old Republic by removing with violent force obstacles to the centralization of federal power.

In *National Review*, another student of Strauss, Charles Kesler, tells us that conservatives, eager to take back the Republican Party from its “liberal wing,” were inspired by Jaffa’s writings to employ “Lincoln’s principles” of “human equality, liberty, and natural-rights-based constitutionalism.” These abstract rights have not preserved conservative principles; they have compromised them. Liberal Republicans faithfully took Lincoln’s abstract theories to their logical conclusion. Were the affirmative-action policies of the Nixon administration or the corporate-welfare spending long favored by the GOP really unrelated to the founding principles of the Party of Lincoln?

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POLITICAL THEORY

Pulling the Wool Over Their Eyes: A Straussian Memoir

by Kenneth Zaretzke

You may be taken aback by the first part of my title, but do not be. Wool, after all, is that which warms us. In the Ice Age, pulling wool over the eyes was tantamount to survival. That sense lingers in the phrase “pull the wool over your eyes”—or *their* eyes, as we say, referring to those who need our protection. Not just protection from cold weather but from cold

truths.

The second part of my title designates this as a memoir—a Straussian memoir, to be precise. Hence, I begin with a recondite question: “What is what?” Or rather, “What is *the* what?” That question, which appears to be a mere epigram, captures the profound emptiness of what nowadays masquerades as philosophy. When Threnos first asked this question, in that half-ironic form, he bore witness to why he is one of the most penetrating, albeit most obscure, of the ancients.

Threnos understood the what as a prefigurement of political philosophy. He understood himself to be refuting the most fabled of the skeptics, who denied the peremptoriness of the good and who denigrated political philosophy, which makes the good possible. Threnos comes after Plato and in some ways transcends him.

In Threnos’ passion for the life of the mind there was a sturdy and workmanlike confidence in reason properly understood. By “the what,” Threnos did not mean what we, amid the multitudinous debasements of modern thought, would call what. What *we* call what is but a vulgar version of what the ancients called the what. *The* what could not be more different than mere “what” standing alone. *The* what points to a way of thinking much favored by the best of the ancients. It bestrides mere “what” like a colossus. And it does something else. It speaks the truth—not the mere truth of the matter, but the truth as such, which is not necessarily the truth of the absolute.

To speak of *the* what, in this exalted sense, is to understand the seriousness of the ancients when they attacked every form of skepticism and nihilism. I would go even further than this: To speak of *the* what is to speak of humanliness. Oddly, there is no word in the language of the ancients that captures the meaning of this English word, yet in everything they did and said, the best thinkers of the past not only embraced it but embodied it.

Humanliness, note well, is not a species of what some people choose to call anthropocentrism. An intel-

ligent Martian possesses aspects of humanliness. The idea of humanliness, as I said, is not anthropocentric. But having mentioned anthropocentrism, which is central to the social sciences, I must also say something about science, which is inferior to poetry. I mean poetry rightly interpreted: When badly interpreted, poetry is positively harmful—which is another way of saying that one must read with care. In science, there is no *reading*. There is only doing, experimenting, technologizing. Even cosmologists, those fanciers of imagined worlds, merely spin mathematical formulas in their heads. They don’t read anything in the course of their duties. Above all, they don’t read anything that requires careful interpretation, which is all-important.

Plato and Threnos grasped this profound truth more keenly than any other thinker; and those who advise princes, by which I mean politicians, would do well to understand this—and also to understand Plato as he understood himself. The latter is, of course, no easy task. But given the right teachers, it is not an impossible task.

I must add that part of that task, in a democracy, involves responding in the proper way to Tocqueville. The illustrious Frenchman is the most truly gentlemanly of the true gentlemen. He knew that the source of motivation in the *demos* cannot be the will of the people, for the people are often blind. Nor can it be the aristocratic elite, for even the best aristocrats typically lack the fullness of esoteric understanding. What suffices for fully understanding the contemporary *demos* is the properly mediated wisdom of the ancients—Threnos, Socrates, Thucydides, when properly read. Tocqueville may not have said much about this, but he knew the truth of it.

What Tocqueville knew is that in the ancient writers is to be found *nous*—knowledge, knowingness. The “light of knowledge” is the traditional metaphor here. To be sure, there is that of which one dare not speak, because knowing it is too dangerous; Maimonides on Y---h is the best example of this in regard to the history of reve-

lation. In the domain of reason, too, *nous* has certain limitations. “Human-kind cannot bear too much reality.” The truth—the *whole* truth—is not for everyone, and that is why *nous* must be properly understood. It is also why only great philosophers can shed light on the ultimate things: the good, the true, and the beautiful. (Why not also love? Notice that love is not accompanied by the tell-tale article: We do not refer to *the* love. Is that not remarkable? It may be that love is not one of the ultimate things, though it is surely one of the important things. It has its own grandeur, but it inhabits a realm utterly different from that of the good, the true, and the beautiful.)

These ultimate things inhabit the realm of *telos*, which is the keystone of politics and which is often mangled by modern thinkers. It does not simply refer to the end, or purpose, of nature or of human striving. It points more fundamentally to the goal-seeking of the great man, whatever his particular goal happens to be. In greatness of spirit and greatness of achievement is to be found the true nature of *telos*. The great man is the personification of *telos*—this was well understood by Threnos and, to a lesser extent, by Plato.

The point is? The point is that a proper comprehension of *telos* helps us to remember the importance of remembering. To refer to remembering is to refer to the past, which ought not to be ignored. No one knows the past; one can only remember it. But let me remind you that this is a *Straussian* memoir. The task before me, thus, is much more than remembering the importance of remembrance or the importance of the past, rightly understood. It is something bigger. It is no less than the excavation of human knowledge. That is the real point. And, thus, I must turn to anthropology.

I am an anthropologist of the academy, like most contemporary Straussians. Hence, in a memoir it is fitting for me to remember when, as a student, I heard the lectures of Leo Strauss. Now, much has been written of the Straussian brand of discipleship. But what I will say is that the intellectual intoxication, such as it was,

was spiritually sober. The experience lifted the soul as it is best lifted, in an understanding of the greatness of the ancients and the importance of political philosophy. Political philosophy is the greatest thing that can be apprehended by the soul here and now, in this temporal realm. I do not speak of the transcendent, which is merely the domain of religion.

Before us fortunate students was the very embodiment of the mastery and mystery of the permanent things. We were enthralled, but more than that we were illuminated, as few of our peers elsewhere could ever be. Some among us did not quite understand the teachings, and of course none of us understood them as fully as did our great teacher. Those who understood the teachings adequately were given an exceptional gift, the gift of understanding history's greatest thinkers as they understood themselves. They understood themselves esoterically, wherein the wool is pulled over the eyes—but one must not speak too plainly.

I speak boldly of a "Straussian" memoir. What can this be? A memoir is a display of one's life and purported experience. But the followers of the true teaching are not interested in experience, but in wisdom. So the memoir I am presenting to you must concern itself with the wisdom of the discerning mind and the prepared heart. It is a memoir not only of a life but, more importantly, of the timeless things. These things constitute the memoir that is called "Straussian." Yet it must be borne in mind that this is merely a crude label. A better label would be: lovers of the ancient teaching, properly understood.

Let me share with you a little story. Not so long ago, one of my most brilliant students asked me: How do I achieve a unique greatness, and how can I know when it is unique? That deep and impressive question was enough to provoke a two-hours-long response from me; regrettably it was not recorded. But my reply to my student may be summed up very specifically: You will achieve an impressive greatness by writing, for the edifica-

tion of the *demos*, a Straussian biography of Paul Wolfowitz while remembering, in the proper way, that a sucker is born every minute.

This advice was well received, I'm happy to report, and I eagerly left for Allan Bloom's latest *soirée*. My further meditations on the nature of *the* what would have to wait.

Kenneth Zaretzke writes from Seattle.

LAW

Who Are You? The Law of Status

by Gerald Russello

What do veterans, drug users, children, and suspected terrorists have in common? They all have specialized courts to deal with them and their legal issues. Illinois has become the latest state to set up a special "veterans' court" to handle veterans charged with nonviolent crimes. (New York has had a similar program in place since early last year.) The court will not only adjudicate offenses but connect veterans to a range of services and programs that are meant to prevent them from becoming repeat offenders. The judge organizing this court has even selected veterans to serve as prosecutors and defense attorneys.

The first family courts date from the 1960's and Great Society-like initiatives meant to address "root causes" of dysfunctional behavior. Their origins, however, stretch back a century or more to the orphans' courts and reform houses established by the community organizers of the Gilded Age. Rather than simply punish, their advocates thought, courts should rehabilitate those offenders who were thought to be reformable.

The existence of such specialized courts raises some interesting questions for American law. Equality before the law is supposed to be a protection against the assertion of arbitrary power. At its most banal, there is the

enforced frustration of waiting around in a courthouse all day while being considered for jury duty. Everyone there is at the same level, and 12 (in the classic formulation) will be randomly selected to judge whatever is on the docket. But specialized courts explicitly assign people a forum based on who they are, a forum denied other people because of who they are. A nonveteran, in other words, is out of luck, at least with regard to the attention the law will give him. In a world of increasingly straitened resources, favored status may come to mean better treatment by the legal system.

The old common-law system was comfortable with different laws for different folks. The British common law, for example, had long made room for ecclesiastical courts, which dealt with a range of offenses and controversies. The defense known as "benefit of the clergy," for example, lasted in the United Kingdom until the early 19th century. Although eventually available to anyone who could read, this defense was originally meant to keep clergy from the harsher penalties of the secular courts. It was, in other words, a classic type of status-based court. In the Middle Ages conflicts between feudal tribunals were presided over by the local noble, with a king's justice seeking to impose uniformity over the nation.

The common characteristics of these courts are secrecy, a lack of what we would usually consider due process, and a wide scope within which the judge can act. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, known as FISC, conducts its proceedings, like the Star Chamber, in secrecy. Generally, only the government gets to present its case before the FISC. While these courts do not fit with our culture's current hyperegaltarian rhetoric, as they are quite clearly institutions that promise unequal treatment based on either variable (veteran) or temporarily invariable (child) status, they do square nicely with our obsession with identity politics. If the government can pull you over for being of a certain "type," then maybe you should be able to demand your own court to see if the ac-

tion was justified.

A libertarian might scoff at this and note that, so long as entry into one of these specialized courts is voluntary—as some of them are, at least for now—all is well. Why not allow every identity its own court? This is essentially what happens with private systems of resolving disputes, such as arbitration, which has its status-based variations. Rabbinical courts, called *battei din*, are not uncommon in certain parts of the country. And the archbishop of Canterbury has suggested that *sharia* be introduced into England for those Muslims who wish to be bound by it, although it may be impolitic to ask whether Muslim women have much of a choice in the matter.

Universal rights and top-down legalism have never been conservative causes, and the classic knock on traditionalist conservatives is that they prefer a hierarchical society. On this view, establishing a range of courts might provide a step back to a premodern set of arrangements and reinforce a stratified society. Indeed, the archbishop's suggestion of "overlapping jurisdictions" sounds quaintly old-fashioned, as if he were an apologist for the polyglot Austro-Hungarian Empire rather than a vanguard of the post-multicultural society of modern Britain. These objections miss the point. The world is different, and those conceptions of the self that accompanied the complex relationships in premodern worlds (described with great skill in Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, for example) are no longer possible.

In the older system, the existence of Church courts was at base a recognition that the state was not the only power, and that it did not have exclusive dominion over justice (much less mercy). The Church had Her own ends and jurisdiction, and the state was bound to recognize Her autonomy, at least in some areas. A cleric could assert his status against the power of the state; that claim might be rejected by the state, but such an action would at least be recognized as a transgression of its boundaries.

Now, it is the state itself that sets the boundaries. Today's specialized courts

might have advantages in terms of efficiency, by doing away with the protections of the typical common-law court, but these mechanisms not only reinforce the importance of status but place enormous powers in the hands of the judge and, by derivation, those of the state. And we have a developing jurisprudence that focuses exactly on what happens when the state determines status. In a number of recent cases, religious groups have been forced to accept laws that make them act contrary to their beliefs, such as forcing pharmacists with religious objections to dispense the "morning-after" pill or requiring Catholic Charities to place foster children with same-sex couples. In such cases, the state has denied rights based on these parties' status and has ruled instead that other groups' status (as consumer or nonbeliever) should be vindicated. The example of religious groups or individuals is important because religious identity is the only status recog-

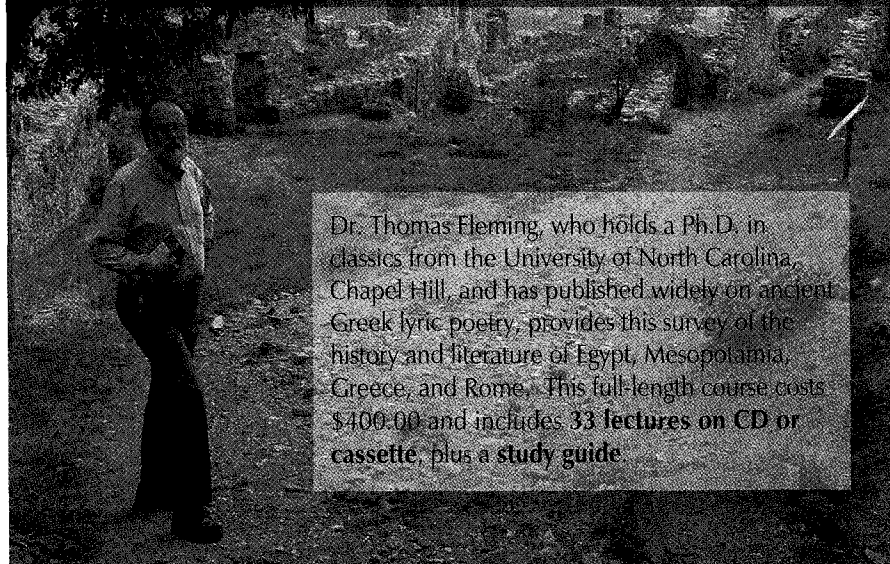
nized in the Constitution as deserving of special consideration.

Your status now promises (or threatens) to become one more weapon in the identity-politics arsenal. There is no easily recognizable way to divvy up one's status, and it is a postmodern trope (not completely true, but true enough) that one's identity is forever malleable. An individual could conceivably claim a different identity every day. The malleable rhetoric of the law could easily accommodate these identities, and clever lawyers could make a case for special access or treatment. If veterans get their own court, one of these talented lawyers might say, why not others? One does not have to think very hard to come up with other groups in contemporary America who might enjoy courts that are sensitive to their special needs and circumstances.

*Gerald Russello writes from
New York City.*

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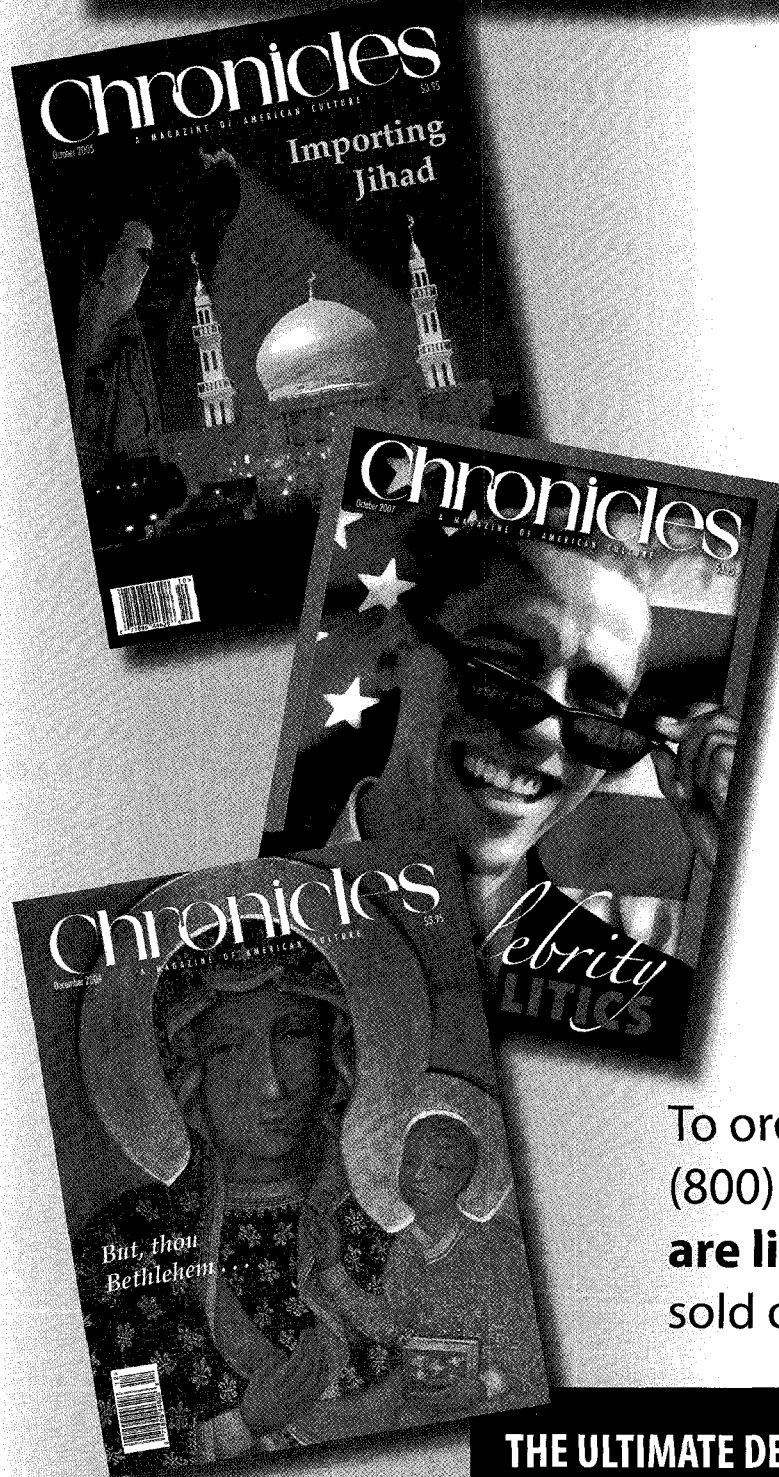
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Cupidity

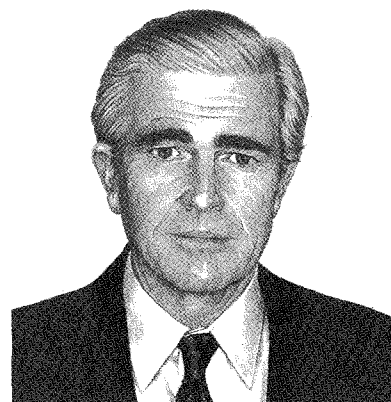
"*Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas*," Chaucer's pardoner warned his guilt-ridden audiences: The root of all evil is greed. Steven Soderbergh's *The Informant!* serves as a latter-day illustration of this admonition.

In *The Informant!* cupidity expresses itself as *avoir du pois*. In this true story of the 1990's international price-fixing scandal at the agribusiness behemoth Archer Daniels Midland, all the company's executives are overweight, especially when compared with the modestly paid FBI agents who pursue them. It's what a medievalist would call a pictorial *exemplum*. Fat denotes exorbitant acquisitiveness; thinness, virtuous moderation. That is why Matt Damon gained 30 pounds to play the part of Mark Whitacre, the ADM executive who blew the whistle on his company's malfeasance even as he benefited from it. While it's a hazardous stunt, Damon's weight gain has the advantage of literally bestowing gravitas on his portrayal of an ambitious and needy young man eager to move up in the world at whatever cost.

Damon plays Whitacre as a grown-up Tom Sawyer, a 35-year-old man who cultivates a boyish charm to get his way. His youthful enthusiasm is positively infectious, and it's backed by a never-failing smile that announces he's everyone's best buddy. Nevertheless, he is ever ready to sell out those who may slow his progress. He's a naive Judas who turns in his colleagues for illegal practices in which he himself participated. Despite his treachery, he witlessly thinks the board of directors will logically conclude he is the only man to take over the company he compromised. In reality, when everything was all over, Whitacre had cost ADM \$100 million in fines and untold amounts in court costs and lost profits—not the surest route to the top.

ADM hired Whitacre for his expertise in lysine, the essential amino acid

that's fed to cattle, pigs, and chickens in order to bulk them up as rapidly as possible during their journey to market and, ultimately, our tables. Beyond the livestock, lysine had also been adding some serious bulk to ADM's bottom line. Whitacre's job was to develop and manage the plant that produced lysine. The process was simple enough: Feed corn dextrose to bacteria, and, as company insiders put it, the bugs crap lysine. There was a problem, however. After a promising beginning, the bacteria stopped producing lysine in the quantities ADM required to meet its sales quotas. A virus was attacking the bugs, and no one knew how to stop it. ADM was now faced with the risk of losing market share to one of their biggest competitors, the Japanese company Ajinomoto Inc. Mick Andreas, ADM's vice chairman and son of Dwight Andreas, chairman of the board, was demanding that Whitacre do something. Shortly afterward, Whitacre reported the cause of the difficulty. He was getting calls at home from an executive in Japan employed by Ajinomoto. This fellow knew all about the problem, even how much it was costing ADM monthly. It seemed Ajinomoto had placed a mole in ADM to contaminate the bacterial vats. For a price, the mysterious caller offered to expose the mole and thus allow ADM to restore production. Andreas was not, in principle, against paying the caller, whoever he was, but he wanted protection. He didn't want to find himself inadvertently breaching any international trade agreements. So he notified the FBI. Whitacre strongly disapproved of the move, but having no choice, he reluctantly agreed to allow his home phone to be tapped by local FBI field agent Brian Shepherd. But when Shepherd came to fix his phone, Whitacre blurted out that there was something more amiss at ADM. The upper brass at Archer had been fixing



The Informant!

Produced and distributed
by Warner Brothers
Directed by Steven Soderbergh
Screenplay by Scott Z. Burns based
on Kurt Eichenwald's book

their lysine prices with their Japanese and Korean competitors to keep them artificially high so they could all share in a more profitable pie. As a result, the livestock industry had been paying millions more annually for lysine than they would have in an unrigged market, and this extra cost had been passed on to consumers. Some analysts have concluded that over the years ADM cost the U.S. economy tens of billions of dollars with such illegal fixes not only in the lysine market but in several other of their product lines. What's more, the higher prices had depressed demand, causing further economic hardship for producers.

From the moment Whitacre divulged this information, Shepherd knew he had something much bigger than an industrial shakedown on his hands. And he was right. The ADM case would become the largest anti-trust investigation in American history. And it would be prosecuted with the help of the highest-ranking corporate insider ever enlisted in such litigation, an executive who agreed—squeamishly, at first, and then with growing enthusiasm—to wear a wire and record his colleagues conducting their illegal operations.

Whitacre notified the agents where upcoming out-of-town meetings would be held so that they could vid-

eotape the executives wheeling and dealing with their Asian counterparts. Soon Whitacre considered himself a dashing secret agent. He even showed his neighborhood gas-station attendant his attaché case equipped with audio-recording equipment, announcing himself as Agent Double-0-Fourteen. "I'm twice as smart," he quipped. The long-suffering agents had to listen to him compulsively whispering into his lapel mic relaying his every move. "I'm walking into the building now," he breathlessly and uselessly informed them on more than one occasion.

The narrative moves at a sprightly pace with Damon steering his paunch in front of him as he waddles cheerfully along. Like any other good executive, he tries perpetually to please everyone in sight. He can't refrain from telling every new acquaintance that he was orphaned at ten but was fortunate enough to be taken in by a wealthy man who ran an amusement park. He read an article once, he confides in his voice-over narration, while he was at

Cornell. (That's an Ivy League school, he adds, just in case we aren't sure.) This article pointed out that people are naturally sympathetic to orphans, especially if said orphan has made good. The story's just perfect.

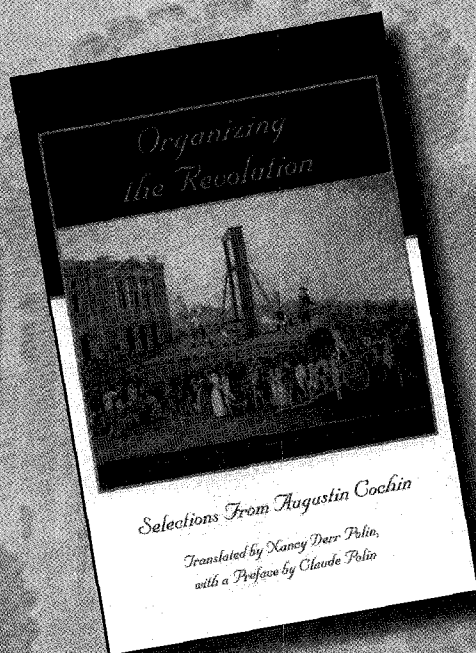
Soderbergh has Damon keep up this inanely irrelevant narration throughout the film, creating a disconnect between what we're hearing and what we're seeing. Whitacre only occasionally explains what's on the screen. He prefers sharing with us his enthusiasm for desirable products and self-help fads. He tells us he has well over two million frequent-flier miles and that he tries to do daily isometric exercises at his desk or during meetings. We learn his preferences in automobiles, hair products, and soaps. He explains why he likes Italian ties better than American ones. In fact, he's a walking *Consumer Reports*. Where is this going, you wonder? What is the point? The point is that there is no point, beyond the creature comforts to which Whitacre is devoted. He has no purpose other than consuming. He's all about

bulking up with as much of the good life as possible. Honor, integrity, purpose are merely words. But a shower gel—that you can feel in your hands!

Then things become stranger and stranger as the FBI handlers begin to see another side of Whitacre, which begins to emerge as if from behind a cloud of product placements. And this side threatens to compromise their case. The growing dismay on the agents' faces is at once pitiable and tremendously funny. Whitacre turns out to be that most sinister of operatives, a genuine American innocent.

If you're unfamiliar with the case, this is about as much as you'll want to know before seeing the film. Afterward, you might want to pick up Soderbergh's source, Kurt Eichenwald's book *The Informant*, originally published without Soderbergh's mocking exclamation point. Soderbergh has made good use of Eichenwald's work, but there's much more to the ADM/Whitacre story in the book, and it's all quite pertinent to our understanding of American commercial culture. ◀

FROM CHRONICLES PRESS



Organizing the Revolution

Selections From Augustin Cochin

translated by Nancy Derr Polin

Preface by Claude Polin

Augustin Cochin (1876-1916) undertook a minute analysis of the role that provincial clubs and societies played in the genesis of the French Revolution. His work shows clearly how the revolution was organized long before the events of 1789. This translation is an attempt to present his unfinished writings in a clear and coherent form.

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America: The Movie

Another of those alarming clashes between solid democratic values has arisen, as the Supreme Court has agreed to rehear arguments relating to *Citizens United v. Federal Election Committee*. In the weeks before the 2008 Democratic primaries, Citizens United, a conservative nonprofit group and creator of an uncomplimentary documentary called *Hillary: The Movie*, had wished to broadcast commercials for its product and show the film in theaters and via video-on-demand services for cable and satellite subscribers. But in 2008, a federal district court held Citizens United to be in violation of the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance law, which prohibits, together with a great many other actions hitherto found inoffensive, the broadcast or transmission of "electioneering communications" underwritten by a corporation 30 days before a presidential primary and 60 days before a general election. Citizens United argues that the ban amounts to a denial of its constitutional right to freedom of speech, and its claim has been supported by the usual advocates of the First Amendment.

Helpful people are suggesting that the Snowe-Jeffords Amendment to McCain-Feingold, which exempts nonprofit corporations in such cases where the words "electioneering communications" are interpreted too broadly, offers the Court an obvious solution. One might assume that the issue was resolved nearly two centuries ago in the Dartmouth College case, in which the Court ruled that corporations enjoy the legal standing of persons. Chief Justice Marshall's opinion has always seemed to me a bit of a legal stretch, the length of which is perhaps indicated by the present case. Every person, of course, has his opinions, to which he is entitled and which he has the right to express under Anglo-American jurisprudence. But can a corporation really be said to hold opinions? All corporations have

agendas, certainly, but it is clearly impossible that they should have ideas according to any reasonable understanding of the word. These agendas are designed to facilitate the sale of their product, which, in the case of media corporations, amounts to the agendas themselves, similar to Citizens United's Clinton video but infinitely broader. And the reality of a news corporation's opinion is inversely related to its size. The New York Times Corporation has a personality of sorts, though not a nice one, expressed by its editorial page and by its columnists. But what personality has ABC, NBC, CBS, Time-Warner, or News Corporation? Yet each of these organizations has agendas, however inchoate—as does Citizens United. Why not ban Rupert Murdoch from broadcasting 60 days before a national election? Or Punch Sulzberger from publishing? The standard answer is freedom of the press, the right of free citizens to know what is going on in their country and in the world, the right to debate these things and to hear them debated freely. Only, in the age of the mass media, that is not what national communications—and the corporations that make a profit from them—are really about.

The First Amendment was drafted with hundreds of local newspaper editors, thousands of political pamphleteers, and hundreds of thousands of orators on the village hustings in mind. Doubtless many of these people were would-be demagogues, but all of them wrote or spoke their minds as independent individuals, usually presenting the facts as they had them—"with some stretchers," as Huck Finn said. But the mass media of today are capable only of lies. Or, to put it another way, they are incapable of speaking, or transmitting, truth, including the so-called facts. (A fact, Chesterton said, has no meaning, though we insist on giving it one.) Even were they inclined to do so, they would not, for the very



good reason that they cannot. The media have nothing worthwhile to say because the audience they address is, by definition, a mass audience—that is, in terms of genuine human communication, no audience at all. Both the right and the left, Republicans and Democrats, have been denouncing media bias for generations. Media bias, they claim, prevents the people from having the true facts about public life, and thus makes democracy unworkable. But really the situation is the same no matter which side runs the show. The media represent the massed mental power of the corporate world, political as well as business, and that power is the power of the Prince of Lies. "In this age of democracy," John Lukacs says, "[the] intrusion of mind into matter tends to increase." This is because mind intruded into matter becomes matter—in other words, mere product.

But the mass media have their mavericks, objectors will say—Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, and Pat Buchanan on television, Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage on the radio. Yet they, too, are held tightly on an invisible leash by their corporate masters. Beyond that, these anticelebrities have a cultural and political effect that is pernicious. When Tocqueville landed in America in 1831, he, like every European visitor to the United States in that time, was impressed by the extent to which the Americans lived and breathed the politics of their towns, their states, and their country, and also by the freedom and unselfconsciousness of their public debates with one another. You could not encounter an

American, Tocqueville noted, without the risk of being promptly but-tholed and held hostage to an interminable political oration. Today, Americans assiduously avoid discussing politics in social situations. Their political conversations occur almost in hiding, among family and like-minded associates, or one-way—nightly, in the privacy of their dens in front of the television set—as Hannity and Beck reinforce their own opinions: remote and unanswerable presences, but reassuring ones. It is all a bit like watching pornography.

The homogenized, disinfected, carefully controlled, and apparently neutral and anodyne content sustained by the mass media, by denying notice to, and access by, minority opinion, quite naturally ensures that dissenters develop progressively hostile, extreme, and unreasonable opinions and ideas, and resort to the relatively unregulated internet to express them. Unlike the official media, the web is a bedlam of raw personal opinion, but here lack of constraint has the same result as overconstraint: suspicion, uncertainty, and resentment. One would need to have lost a leg to frostbite in the Arctic and a nose to skin cancer Down Under to be able to evaluate fairly the facts behind a story in the *New York Times* about the reality of global warming, just as one would have to have expert knowledge, not only of the engineering principles of high-rise construction and airplane design, but also of what Dick Cheney whispered in George W. Bush's ear after being booed by Democrats on a trip to New York City, to form a fair opinion regarding the charge that the destruction of the World Trade Center was planned from the beginning and carried out by the President of the United States. The unpleasant truth is that every writer needs an editor, albeit an honest editor who is as well an individual and a human being, not a corporate automaton. Ultimately, unrestrained populist babble is no more reliable than the corporate monotone that pretends to inform us about the shape and content of the modern world we inhabit.

The law of diminishing returns weighs heavily on the progress of technology, including and perhaps especially on the technology that makes mass communication possible. Technology answers to human material wants, and yet, when pressed beyond certain limits, technology, which is a product of our nature, denies, defeats, and corrupts that nature, and therefore human society with it. Thirty years ago, Edward Abbey replied to technocrats who protested that technocratic development can never be selective by countering that, indeed, it *must* be selective. The mass media corrupt, deform, and destroy the culture of civilization in innumerable ways, but we are speaking of politics here, democratic politics in particular. "I will posit it as a sort of principle," Jacques Ellul wrote in the 1960's, conflating political and cultural concerns in a single sentence, "that the predominance of news produces a fundamental political incapacity in the individual, be he a leader or just a citizen." "The man who lives in the news . . .," Ellul added, "is a man without memory." One thinks of Camus' description of modern man as a creature who reads the newspapers and fornicates.

In the world of the mass media, journalism and politics meet and meld on equal yet indistinguishable terms, in company with commercial advertising and public relations. In the media, as in modern society as a whole, these things become inseparable, forming a vast conglomerate of associated interests and mutual aims that can hardly be disentangled. In these circumstances, politics becomes unworkable and in fact impossible, as the media manipulate reality, obscuring vital connections and ignoring means and motives, while deciding for themselves what is significant and what is not. A republic (defined by Orestes Brownson as any government that is founded upon a polity) is dependent on its citizens' connection with reality, which the mass media in America and the rest of the Western world are doing their best to replace in the public mind with a huge, amorphous, social and political myth they could not

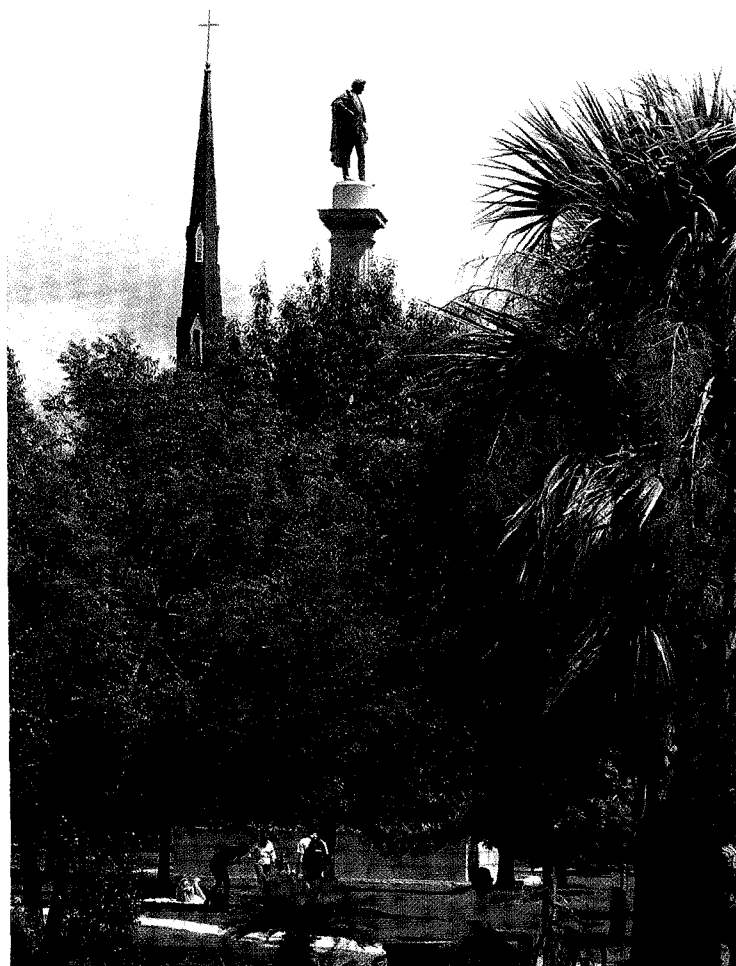
begin to explain to themselves. The world as it exists is both less bad and much worse than the media present it. The French writer Jean Guéhenoc has suggested that "the ultimate stage of democracy by media will be reached when political debate no longer has any influence on actual decisions but on the collective perception that a people has of itself." That stage would represent the triumph of ideology in American politics, and the election campaigns of 2008, which ended by putting the first truly ideological president in the White House, suggest that we are closer than we think to realizing that dream.

Meanwhile, the very human problem of the electronic mass media appears humanly insoluble. Short of either a nuclear winter or a global-warming summer that destroys much of the natural world and civilization along with it, the media will dominate what remains of that civilization for as far as the human eye can see. The media are no plot but a technological excrescence that was not designed overall but incrementally, and according to technological and financial, rather than human, logic. There is the problem. Mass communications are destructive because they claim to communicate without doing so, and the reason they cannot communicate is that human communication by an impersonal message multiplied scores of millions of times is impossible. To address everyone at once is to address nobody at all. Christ Himself appears to have limited his audiences to 5,000 people, while saving His choicest teachings for private discussions with the Twelve. And the thing works both ways. Just as a broadcasting company cannot address the masses in any significant way, so the masses, taken as individuals, can receive nothing of significance from this central impersonal source. On the receiving end of the airwaves or fiber-optic transmission line, there is incomprehensibility; on the sending one, the dumb silence of the virtually mute.

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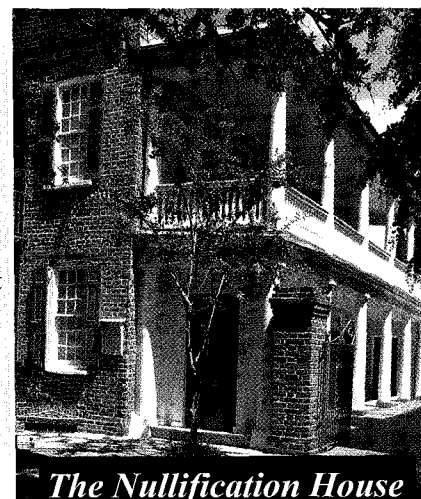
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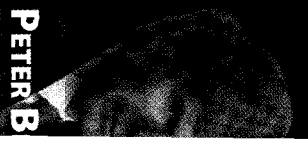
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